

NEWS > POLITICS > ELECTION

A third member of ex-U.S. Rep. Scott Taylor's staff pleads guilty to role in petition scandal



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Heather Guillot, a former campaign staffer for ex-U.S. Rep. Scott Taylor, pleaded guilty Tuesday, March 30, 2021 in Virginia Beach Circuit Court to a misdemeanor election fraud charge.



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A third member of Scott Taylor's 2018 campaign staff pleaded guilty Tuesday morning to her role in a petition scandal that may have cost the former congressman reelection that year.

Heather Guillot, 32, entered the plea in Virginia Beach Circuit Court to a misdemeanor election fraud count. She initially faced a felony charge, but was allowed to plead to the misdemeanor as part of an agreement with the special prosecutor.

Judge Margaret Spencer then gave her a suspended one-year jail sentence and fined her \$1,000, which also was part of the agreement. It was the same deal offered to two other former campaign staffers.

Roanoke Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney John Beamer, the special prosecutor assigned to the case after Virginia Beach Commonwealth's Attorney Colin Stolle recused himself, said the investigation into the fraudulent petition signatures turned in by Taylor's staff is ongoing. He declined to comment further.



Guillot's attorney, Richard Doummar, said Guillot was relieved to be finally putting the matter behind her. She is no longer involved in politics, he said. A LinkedIn profile for her states that she is a workforce management consultant for a company that offers human resources management software and services.

"This was just a mistake," Doummar said. "A lot was going on at the time of the election."

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Doummar said he could not explain why the petition pages turned in by his client had the names of four dead people listed on them. “I really have no idea how that could have happened,” he said.

According to a statement of facts entered in the case, Guillot was hired in the spring of 2018 as a member of Taylor’s campaign staff. Taylor, a Republican, was seeking a second term in office at the time and was running against Democrat Elaine Luria.

When Shawn Brown decided to enter the race as an independent candidate after failing to get the Democratic nomination, Taylor and some of his top aides decided to help her collect the 1,000 signatures needed to get on the ballot, the statement said. The team hoped that having a third candidate would siphon votes from Luria.

During the week of June 4, 2018, several of Taylor’s campaign staffers began collecting signatures. A week later, Taylor’s staffers signed each page in front of a notary. Guillot turned in 12 pages and swore on each that she witnessed every signature on it. Each page contains a warning that falsely signing the affidavit is a felony punishable by up to 10 years.

An investigation by state police determined the signatures on one page submitted by Guillot had actually been gathered by Tina Mapes, a lieutenant in the Virginia Beach Sheriff’s Office, the statement said.

Separate investigations by The Virginian-Pilot, WHRO Public Media and state Democrats showed that dozens of the signatures submitted by Taylor’s staff had been forged. At least four of the people named were dead and all four of those names appeared on pages signed and submitted by Guillot.
