

CRIME

Democratic campaign manager gets probation for filing fake NJ governor's race petitions



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James Devine, long involved in Central Jersey politics, has been sentenced to two years' probation for attempting to fraudulently place his domestic partner's name on the Democratic primary ballot for New Jersey governor in 2021.

The sentencing on Friday was part of a negotiated plea agreement with the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability, Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin announced.

In August Devine, a Lambertville resident, pleaded guilty to the third-degree crime concerning nomination certificates or petitions during a hearing before Mercer County Superior Court Judge Robert E. Lytle. In pleading guilty, Devine acknowledged that he knew the petitions were falsely made when he filed them.

In 2021 Devine served as the political campaign manager for Lisa McCormick and allegedly attempted to get her name on the ballot as a contender for the Democratic nomination for governor in the June 8, 2021, primary against Gov. Phil Murphy.

“Rather than knocking on doors and making a good faith effort to convince voters to support his candidate, the defendant misused voters’ information without authorization, in order to deceive the state into believing his candidate met the bare

minimum of requirements to be on the ballot,” Platkin said. “Cheating in a race for elected office is illegal and undemocratic, and there are consequences for it.”

“Criminal activity that threatens peoples’ faith in the fairness and legitimacy of our elections is unacceptable,” said Drew Skinner, Office of Public Integrity and Accountability executive director. “This case should send a message that election fraud will be detected and offenders will be held accountable.”

A state grand jury **returned an indictment in March** on three counts, offenses concerning nomination certificates or petitions, and tampering with public records or information, both third-degree crimes, and falsifying or tampering with records, a fourth-degree crime

An investigation determined that Devine sent the New Jersey Secretary of State’s Division of Elections about 1,948 fraudulent voter certifications via email, in an attempt to enable McCormick to compete in the primary race.

The New Jersey Democratic State Committee on April 9, 2021 filed a challenge to that effort, enumerating various issues with the voter certifications that Devine had provided, with the committee alleging there were questions about the authenticity of those petitions.

Devine unsuccessfully ran for mayor in Rahway in the 2014 Democratic primary.

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