

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 19, 2014

Campaign Manager Charged with Buying Votes in a Donna, Texas, School Board Election

A campaign manager was arrested late yesterday and accused of paying voters to vote in the November 2012 school board election in Donna, Texas.

Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson of the Southern District of Texas made the announcement.

The four-count indictment charges Francisco "Frankie" Garcia, 47, of Donna, with conspiring to buy votes, paying for votes, and aiding and abetting others to buy votes stemming from the vote-buying scheme. Garcia was arrested the evening of Sept. 18, 2014, in Alton, Illinois, and will make his initial appearance in the Southern District of Illinois this afternoon. The indictment was returned under seal Sept. 16, 2014, and unsealed today following his arrest.

According to the indictment, during the November 2012 general election, Garcia worked as a campaign manager for four candidates to the Donna School Board. During that time, he allegedly bought votes and worked with other campaign workers to pay voters and to offer to pay voters in this election to vote for particular candidates. The indictment alleges that Garcia paid voters by giving the voters either cocaine or cash in exchange for their votes.

An indictment is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Three campaign workers – Rebecca Gonzalez, 44, and Diana Balderas Castaneda, 48, both of Donna, Texas, and Guadalupe Escamilla, 72, of Weslaco, Texas – previously pleaded guilty to vote-buying charges stemming from this election.

This case is being investigated by the FBI, and is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Monique Abrishami and Jennifer Blackwell of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Leo J. Leo of the Southern District of Texas.

Component(s):Criminal Division**Press Release Number:**

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