



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Southern District of New York

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**Bronx District Leader and Board of Elections Employee
Charged with Bribery, Extortion, Fraud, and Identity Theft Offenses**

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York; Christie M. Curtis, the Acting Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"); and Jocelyn E. Strauber, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the unsealing of an Indictment charging NICOLE TORRES, an elected district leader in the Bronx and an employee of the New York City Board of Elections (the "NYC-BOE"), with illegally demanding payments from Bronx residents to herself and a local organization (the "Bronx Organization") in exchange for selecting those individuals as poll workers. TORRES is also charged with falsifying documents to make it appear that certain individuals had worked as poll workers on particular dates, when, in truth and fact, they had not. TORRES and other members of the scheme then allegedly split the fraudulently obtained paychecks issued to the no-show poll workers. TORRES was arrested yesterday morning and presented yesterday afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Stewart D. Aaron. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge Mary Kay Vyskocil.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "As alleged, Nicole Torres, an elected official and City employee, brazenly abused her power and lined her own pockets for over five years by demanding that poll workers pay her bribes in order to work as a poll worker and by falsifying records to make it look like certain individuals worked as poll workers during an election even though they never did. This Office is committed to holding elected officials and public employees accountable if they abuse their positions of trust and break the law."

Acting Assistant Director in Charge Christie M. Curtis said: "For at least five years, District Leader Nicole Torres allegedly abused her position within the Board of Elections by charging Bronx residents a fee to work as poll workers and misrepresenting poll workers' presence on assigned shifts to fraudulently collect their salaries. Elected officials have a duty to act within the community's best interests, not steal thousands of dollars from this city's government and its citizens. The FBI will never tolerate corrupt individuals who selfishly manipulate their authority at the cost of those they are expected to serve."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: "As charged, this City Board of Elections employee and elected district leader abused her authority for personal profit. She allegedly demanded payments from prospective poll workers whom she was responsible for selecting, and

pocketed salaries that were paid to no-show poll workers based on documents that she falsified, according to the indictment. When a City employee uses their trusted position to illegally enrich themselves, as alleged here, they undermine public trust and confidence in government and unfairly tarnish the reputations of those who do their jobs with integrity each and every day. I thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York and the FBI for their partnership on this important investigation.”

According to the allegations contained in the Indictment:¹

Since in or about 2019, TORRES has been a district leader for New York’s 81st Assembly District in the Bronx, New York. In addition, since at least in or about 2016, TORRES has been an employee of the NYC-BOE. While working at the NYC-BOE, TORRES has, at times, been responsible for ensuring that poll workers are paid for their work during early voting and election day. TORRES abused her power as a district leader and a NYC-BOE employee to engage in two illegal schemes.

First, from at least in or about 2019, up to and including in or about August 2024, TORRES agreed to require and required Bronx residents to pay a sum of money, usually \$150, either to her or to the Bronx Organization in exchange for TORRES selecting those individuals as poll workers for upcoming elections. Both the Bronx Organization and TORRES profited from the scheme. TORRES personally obtained at least approximately \$28,000 in illegal payments. TORRES received the payments, often in the amount of \$150, through mobile payment applications, money orders, and checks. In certain instances, TORRES received money orders or checks that were written out to the Bronx Organization, and TORRES altered the payee line on those money orders or checks to say “Nicole Torres” so that she could deposit that money into her personal bank account.

Second, from at least in or around 2018, up to and including in or about August 2024, TORRES agreed to falsify the Forms Booklet—which is a NYC-BOE record in which poll workers record their attendance at a particular poll site—to make it appear that certain individuals (the “No-Show Poll Workers”) worked as poll workers during early voting and election day when, in truth and fact and as TORRES well knew, those individuals did not work on those dates. TORRES often worked with coordinators who oversaw the Forms Booklets at specific poll sites. These coordinators signed in No-Show Poll Workers in the Forms Booklets, frequently at TORRES’s direction. TORRES and her co-conspirators then received the salaries for the No-Show Poll Workers—sometimes through the mail—and split the fraudulently obtained salaries among themselves. While working at the NYC-BOE, at relevant times, TORRES was responsible for ensuring that poll workers, including the No-Show Poll Workers, were paid. In furtherance of the scheme, TORRES communicated with her co-conspirators in person, on phone calls, and through text messages. Through these communications, TORRES and her co-conspirators, among other things, shared the personal identifying information of the No-Show Poll Workers, discussed which co-conspirator should falsely sign the No-Show Poll Workers’ names in the Forms Booklets, and discussed how to split the fraudulently obtained salaries of the No-Show Poll Workers. Based on her participation in the scheme, TORRES personally obtained at least approximately \$36,000 in fraud proceeds, and her co-conspirators personally obtained money as well.

From in or about March 2021 through in or about April 2021, TORRES and a co-conspirator (“CC-1”) used, transferred, and possessed the name of a No-Show Poll Worker

¹ As the introductory phrase signifies, the Indictment, and the description of the Indictment set forth herein, constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.

when they listed that No-Show Poll Worker as having worked as a poll worker in March 2021 even though that No-Show Poll Worker did not work in that month. Torres and CC-1 then split the purported salary that the NYC-BOE issued to that No-Show Poll Worker.

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TORRES, 43, of Bronx, New York, is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit extortion under color of official right, one count of extortion under color of official right, one count of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, one count of honest services wire fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud, one count of mail fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. The first six counts each carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, and the seventh count carries a mandatory term of imprisonment of two years.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of FBI and DOI.

The case is being handled by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Benjamin M. Burkett and Rebecca T. Dell are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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