

FORMER FLAGSTAFF MAYORAL CANDIDATE INDICTED FOR SUBMITTING FORGED SIGNATURES



Posted on August 3, 2020 by Ryan Anderson



Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced today that Victor Varela, a former Flagstaff mayoral candidate, has been indicted by a grand jury on 12 counts, including Fraudulent Schemes and Practices, Presentment of False Instrument for Filing, and Signing of Petitions Violation.

Varela was running for Mayor of Flagstaff before withdrawing from the race in July of this year. Between January 2020 and April 2020, it is alleged Varela knowingly made and submitted forged petition signatures. In several instances Varela purportedly stated that he verified on the forms "that each of the names on the petition was signed in my presence on the date indicated" and that "each signer was a qualified elector who resides at the address given as their residence on the date indicated" when that was not the case.

Nominating petitions for Flagstaff are submitted to the City Clerk. According to the City Charter, "The petition or petitions for nomination, consisting of signatures of qualified voters, aggregating not less than five (5) percent, nor more than ten (10) percent of the number of electors voting at the last preceding municipal General Election, shall be presented to the City Clerk not earlier than one hundred-twenty (120) days, nor later than ninety (90) days before the date set for the Primary Election."

This would have required somewhere approximately between 1,045 (5%) and 2,089 (10%) valid signatures required to qualify for the 2020 primary ballot.

The City of Flagstaff recently [posted the following alert](#):

"The City would also like to inform voters that Victor Varela has withdrawn his candidacy for Mayor. Because the primary ballot has already been printed and mailed to voters who have elected to vote early by mail, Mr. Varela's name will be on the primary ballot; however, any votes cast for Mr. Varela will not be counted."

The primary election is August 4th.

[Copy of indictment available here.](#)

All defendants are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office recently launched its Election Integrity Unit (EIU) webpage that includes a new online [election complaint form](#). EIU was created with the support of the Arizona Legislature to combat reports of voter and election-related fraud. Currently, EIU has 20 active election-related criminal and civil investigations.

Assistant Attorney General Todd Lawson is prosecuting the case. Criminal Division Deputy Chief Paul Ahler assisted is assisting in the prosecution of this case.