

Long history of absentee ballot chaos, complaints in Bridgeport

[Ignacio Laguarda](#) Sep. 19, 2019 Updated: Sep. 25, 2019 7:12 p.m.
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BRIDGEPORT — In calling for an investigation of absentee ballots cast in the primary last week, state Sen. Marilyn Moore argued it was time to do something about absentee ballot “abuse” in the city.

“The days of staying silent and therefore complicit in blatant voter fraud in Bridgeport must end now,” said Moore, who won the most in-person votes, but ultimately lost the Democratic mayoral primary to Mayor Joe Ganim after absentee ballots were tallied.

Although Moore has submitted no proof of absentee ballot fraud, a Hearst Connecticut Media investigation into mail-in votes [found numerous inconsistencies, mistakes and names of ineligible voters who submitted ballots in the Democratic primary](#).

It’s not the first time — and likely won’t be the last — that someone has questioned the absentee ballot process or campaign’s efforts to seek out these votes in Bridgeport.

In 2017, Democratic Chairman Mario Testa [allegedly asked police officers to collect absentee ballots](#) during a City Council primary, leading to calls for an investigation as well. And in 2015, chaos ensued after 700 absentee ballots were [mailed out by the town clerk’s office](#) at the last minute at the urging of the secretary of the state.

Post-election recounts of absentee ballots, the last one having taken place last year, are not uncommon here.

And Bridgeport has come up often in complaints filed with the State Elections Enforcement Commission — many having to do with alleged absentee ballot fraud.

From illegally filling out ballots for others and pressuring voters to cast votes for one candidate, to forging signatures and providing false information to voters, here is a list of some of the improper behavior regarding absentee ballots from the last 30 years:

Oct. 20, 1988 — Former state Sen. Ernie Newton, now a Bridgeport City Council member, agreed to pay a \$1,000 civil penalty after admitting he filled out an absentee ballot for Ada Crosby, requested she sign the envelope, and mailed it for her with her consent during the Sept. 14, 1988 primary. Newton was a candidate in the election, running for state representative from the 124th district.

May 29, 1991 — Curtis E. Mouning, a volunteer campaign worker for then-state Rep. Mario Testa, agreed to pay \$500 for signing the names of five people, including his parents, in absentee ballot application requests for the Sept. 11, 1990 primary.

March 18, 1994 — During the Sept. 14, 1993 primary, campaign worker Jacqueline Rogers wore a nurse's uniform with a certified nurse's name tag, and solicited and collected seven "emergency" absentee ballot votes and also encouraged at least one voter to cast her ballot for James Holloway, a city council candidate at the time. Rogers was barred from participating in campaigns for five years.

Nov. 28, 1994 — Thirty-nine absentee ballots cast in the Sept. 13, 1994 Republican primary were found a day after the election and not counted because of possible human error. Former Town Clerk Hector Diaz agreed to pay \$400 for inadequate storing, handling and processing of absentee ballots.

April 5, 2001 — Former Councilman Warren Blunt agreed to pay \$2,500 after admitting to being present while people filled out absentee ballots and taking possession of those ballots, cast in the March 7, 2000 Democratic Town Committee primary. Blunt was then a candidate for re-election. As a result, he resigned from the Town Committee and did not seek election for two years. Blunt, who served as a councilman for years after that, died in 2016.

April 6, 2001 — Sybil Allen, current member of the city's Board of Education, was found to have completed absentee ballot applications for voters, persuaded one person to forge a signature, forged the signatures of two other applicants, and told one voter that a candidate was not on the ballot. She also was present when ballots were marked and took possession of them. She agreed to pay \$5,000, resign from the Democratic Town Committee and not seek re-election to the Town Committee for two years.

April 9, 2001 — Paulette Park admitted that she assisted people in completing absentee ballot applications, instructed at least one person to make a false statement on why she voted by absentee ballot, was present when ballots were marked, and took possession of the completed ballots. The State Elections Enforcement Commission found Park was paid by Sybil Allen, and took directions from Allen, Testa and Blunt. Park agreed to pay \$5,000 and was barred from participating in any future campaigns.

April 11, 2001 — Ronald Caveness agreed to pay \$4,000, later reduced to \$1,000, resign from the Democratic Town Committee and not seek reappointment for two years after he admitted to distributing absentee ballot applications and being present while voters marked their ballots and then took possession of them.

April 11, 2000 — George Cabrera Jr., of Fair Haven, Mass., agreed to pay \$750 for being present while a resident marked his absentee ballot and took possession of the ballot, which was cast in March 7, 2000 Democratic Town Council primary.

Oct. 13, 2000 — Carlos Reinoso, the brother of former state Rep. Felipe Reinoso, agreed to pay \$250 for voting by absentee ballot when he was not eligible to do so.

Nov. 30, 2000 — Eva Christian distributed and assisted six residents in filing absentee ballot applications while working for City Councilman James Holloway's re-election campaign.

June 2, 2004 — Former Town Clerk Hector Diaz was ordered to comply with state law after a complaint was filed by voters claiming they were told by the Town Clerk's office they could fax absentee ballot applications for the Nov. 4, 2003 election.

Nov. 21, 2011 — Current Bridgeport City Clerk Lydia Martinez [was fined \\$500 for assisting a resident of Harborview Towers](#) with an application for an absentee ballot. The SEEC concluded that Martinez did not properly fill out the section of the form for those assisting voters. The complainant in the filing alleged that Martinez, who was a candidate in the primary election for Bridgeport City Council in 2009, completed absentee ballots for residents.