

Morales pleads guilty to voter fraud

By Jesse Duarte

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Molly Morales, an early organizer of the St. Helena School Board recall campaign, pleaded guilty March 11 to one misdemeanor count of voter fraud for voting twice in the November mail-in election for an empty school board seat.

Morales was sentenced to three years of summary probation. She'll have to perform 150 hours of community service, pay \$1,100 in fines and pay \$4,080 in restitution to Napa County.

In exchange for her plea, a felony count of fraudulently signing a ballot was dismissed.

Prosecutors say Morales received two mail-in ballots for the Nov. 3 special election: one addressed to Molly Janice Morales and another addressed to Molly M. LaPointe.

According to court documents, Morales "marked both ballots and submitted them to the Napa Elections Department (by mail) voting twice in this election."

"I accept the consequences of my actions," Morales said Monday in a statement. "This was a lapse in knowledge and not done with intention. I am sorry for any inconvenience this has caused the community and I look forward to serving the community this coming year."

Registrar of Voters John Tuteur's office forwarded the case to the Napa County District Attorney's office.

Tuteur has said that since only one of the ballots was counted, the integrity of the election — which resulted in Kevin Alfaro beating Roger Adams by a 2-1 margin — was not compromised in any way.

Tuteur said in a statement, "This was an unfortunate incident for Ms. Morales but it is important that all residents of Napa County remember that participating in elections is a privilege that must be exercised responsibly."

Morales, the president of the RLS Parent Group, played an active role in the petition-gathering phase of the recall effort. Organizers say her involvement ended several months prior to the election.