Fraud Claimed in City Elections
Sunland Park Candidates Sue
By Rene Ramirez
Journal Southern Bureau
LAS CRUCES — Three losing candidates in Sunland Park’s March municipal elections have filed suit in state District Court claiming that negligence and fraud by city officials led to their losses. State Police on Wednesday confirmed that they have launched an investigation into the allegations by Fernando Alvarez, Guadalupe Valdivia and Aurelio Garcia Jr., Alvarez lost a bid for the mayor’s office, Valdivia and Garcia lost City Council races.

“We are in the preliminary stages of investigation, and we haven’t been able to confirm that (fraud) occurred,” State Police Sgt. Jose Ramirez said.

The three losing candidates allege, among other things, that as many as 100 votes were cast by people with fictitious addresses and that some people who do not reside in the blue-collar border town were allowed to vote, in person and by absentee ballot, in the March 7 election.

The lawsuit filed April 7 also alleges that election results posted at polling places by City Clerk Joan Fuentes showed 110 votes counted by a computer printout date of Feb. 5 — one month before the official election.

“We want the authorities to punish whoever was responsible, because we have the evidence,” Alvarez said.

Segura said Tuesday he had not seen the lawsuit and could not comment on it. He could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

But the 27-year-old mom of two, part of a twenty-something slate that took office with Segura in 1996, said the lawsuit was a continuation of a “dirty” campaign.

“arrest them, they are going to get an attorney to defend whatever it is they are complaining about,” Estrada said. “I think the elections were fixed. The people made their decision, and (the plaintiffs) can’t accept that. They don’t want to accept that.”

State Police investigators on Tuesday obtained a copy of the lawsuit and a signature from Sunland Park City Clerk’s Office in order to verify who voted in March.

The Dolan Ana County Clerk’s Office has also questioned at least five voting machines used in Sunland Park’s elections.

A check of a voter-registration list obtained from the Dolan Ana County Clerk’s Office showed that at least one Sunland Park man listed an auto mechanic’s garage as a residence.

In addition, six other registered voters listed a single address, which corresponds to a Sunland Park restaurant.

However, Ramirez said, it is not clear whether those people voted in the municipal election.

“It’s going to entail a lengthy investigation,” Ramirez said.

Nuke Worker Aid Proposed
Those Made Ill On Job Would Benefit
By Patric A. Arndt
Washington Bureau
WASHINGTON — Energy Secretary Bill Richardson unveiled a proposal Wednesday to compensate thousands of Energy Department workers who became ill from exposure to radiation and other hazardous materials.

The compensation plan, which is expected to cost at least $25 million over the first five years, would apply to about 3,000 workers at sites including Los Alamos National Laboratory and, according to an Energy Department spokesperson, Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque.

Under the proposal, the government would offer lump-sum payments of at least $50,000 to workers or their survivors, or allow them to negotiate a package that would cover medical costs, lost wages and job retraining.

Richardson said the package serves as an acknowledgment that the government was “negligent” in its handling of nuclear material and other hazardous materials.

“We are moving forward to do the right thing for those workers,” Richardson said. “The government is, for a change, on their side, not against them.”

Also Wednesday, Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., announced he would sponsor a bill similar to Richardson’s plan but specifically aimed at contract employees at Los Alamos.

Under Udall’s bill, such employees suffering from radiation and hazardous material exposure illnesses would be eligible for a lump sum settlement of $200,000, or the contract employees could negotiate a settlement to cover all medical expenses, disability compensation and lost wages.

“We need to shift this to the govern-ment bearing the burden here, because these workers were loyal, they were patriotic, they cared very much about the country, they cared very deeply about the country, and
Vote-fraud lawsuit ‘ridiculous,’ clerk says

By Rick A. Maese

In the wake of a lawsuit alleging election fraud, the Bernallillo County clerk defended her office, calling the charges "ridiculous." Democrats Andrew Lopez and Al Valdes filed a lawsuit this week in state District Court against Clerk Judy Woodward and other county officials charging that the June 6 primary election was rigged and fraudulent.

Lopez and Valdez were each unsuccessful in their bid for the Democratic nomination in the District 2 County Commission race, losing to incumbent Steve Gallaghe.

According to election results, Gallegos won with 48 percent of the vote (3,295 votes), Valdez had 26 percent (1,310, Lopez had 25 percent (1,500), and Mary Ann Romero had 20 percent (1,350).

Romero is not a part of the lawsuit.

Gallegos is set to face Republican Clara Pena in the general election.

Despite long ranks of voters, Lopez said there was no way that Steve won the election.

"It's not surprising by itself," he said. "I'm not surprised they only gave him 5 percent — that isn't even respectable." Lopez ran in previous elections as a Republican.

Though she said she could not discuss specific charges, Woodward said there was no evidence of the allegations, which center around electronic tampering with the voting machines.

"We conducted an honorable and valid election," she continued. "I'm proud of the office we have. I am quite sure there was no error. The vote was done.""But the lawsuit claims the margins of victory were "historically unprecedented" and "defy common sense and informed opinion," Woodward said.

"The only question I could give is that some people believe people who say they will vote for them. Their reasoning seems to be that the elections are so many votes out for the voter that it has to have been a botched election. Sometimes it doesn't turn out the way you want and then there's the court's supervision, and a judgment against costs and attorney's fees.

And Lopez and Woodward are asking the judge to remove Woodward as the general election candidate. According to the lawsuit, Woodward has not been picked by the voters since 2008.

"We're afraid of lawyers," Lopez said. "This is not a lawyer-intensive case; it's a computer-intensive case. We think lawyers would be afraid of the high-tech issues in this case like this."

"We're people going to call some lawyers," Lopez said. "But something needs to be done. Woodward has been violating the election code for a while. This is nonsense. We suspect this has happened in several other elections, but nobody has had the guts to go after them."

Helping hand

Payne seeks un on Sun Tran

by knowledge he's never visited the apartment and seen what we do," Payne said. "He has not been to this office, but he said he has tried work with her repeatedly to increase his stature. He has been in contact with the upper management at the department about his proposal, he said. "I have not talked to transit because mine (Sun Tran) is out of the country for six weeks and the public who will be served.

"I'm glad to hear that," said the deputy director. "I'm excited that we are getting some progress. That's good," he said.

Payne said he wants the council to act on this motion on his proposal. "We need to do that because the system is so pressing that this requires an immediate attention," he said.

Stayce Zolt

Heather Wilson builds case against TV ad

By Stacey Zolt

She says she might ask petitioners to pull the ad attacking her stand on prescription drug coverage.

In the ad, a woman says: "When I think about getting older, it's not only, it's getting older and being buried under a pile of medical bills. I can't pay for my prescription drug costs. And it's a drag."

But Republicans, using parliarn"en's majority party to vote against keeping the plan, would not allow the Democrats to step up for a vote on the House floor.

The Republican plan passed, albeit by a very slim margin, and Democrats of things by surfactants for political parties are going to make it more difficult to bring people to the table," she said.

The attacks on the ad came out of Wilson's congressional office and this is largely a campaign issue. The problem is that the program, offered by insurers, is not a universal one and what we need is a universal plan," Day said. "I don't think it would work and I think we need a universal plan," she said. "If we can do that, we're good."