

Duran faces pressure to resign post

Written by By Joey Peters NM Political Report
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Faces 64 counts of criminal charges

SANTA FE—With calls for Secretary of State Dianna Duran to resign growing by the day, the talk is already starting to shift to who will next fill one of the most important elected statewide offices.
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Duran is facing 64 counts of criminal charges filed last week by Attorney General Hector Balderas for using campaign money for personal use. On Wednesday night, Speaker of the House Don Tripp, R-Socorro, said the State House members will explore impeachment proceedings even as many high-profile state Republicans, including Gov. Susana Martinez, are seemingly distancing themselves from Duran.

New Mexico's two largest newspapers also urged Duran to resign in editorials this week.

If Duran resigns or is impeached by the state Legislature, Martinez will have to appoint someone to fill the role. That role could go to Mary Quintana, who currently serves as Duran's deputy secretary of state.

Some Republicans rumored

Other Republican names for possible replacements are being kicked around by politicians, though they admit it is all speculation at this point. They are state Rep. Kelly Fajardo of Belen,

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Los Alamos County Clerk Sharon Stover, Valencia County Clerk Peggy Carabajal and former Albuquerque City Clerk Amy Bailey.

While Fajardo, Stover and Bailey didn't return voicemails from *New Mexico Political Report* left Tuesday afternoon, Carabajal spoke with us.

Carabajal said she hadn't heard of her name coming up as a possible appointee and that she would "really have to look into that" if it did. She added that her office was "shocked and saddened" to hear about the charges against Duran.

"I hope they do something quick, because that position is very important for all of us," Carabajal said.

She also said that while we're currently in an off-election year, county clerk offices will start working closely with the Secretary of State's Office next January in preparation for that year's primary and general elections.

Duran's current term runs through 2018, but a removal from office and replacement chosen by Martinez, depending on the timing, could kick off an accelerated election for the post during the 2016 general elections—a full two years ahead of schedule.

The Democratic front-runner

Bernalillo County Clerk Maggie Toulouse Oliver is a Democrat who lost to Duran in the race for Secretary of State last year by 3 percentage points. She wouldn't yet say whether she would seek the office again in a currently-hypothetical 2016 election and won't make decision until Duran's situation plays out.

"What I don't want to do quite yet is predict the future," Toulouse Oliver said, adding that she was also "shocked" and "really saddened" to hear about the charges against Duran. "I certainly

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ran for the office because I care about it deeply.”

She also stressed that her thoughts are “exclusively with the ability of that office to do important work at this time.”

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