

Jeff reinstated; incumbent Shendo says ‘race is on’

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 08 April 2016 04:43



SANTA FE – Former State Representative Sandra Jeff is back on the 2016 legislative ballot for the District 22 seat in the New Mexico Senate.

Jeff, a Democrat from Crownpoint, on the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation, reached a deal with the Secretary of State's Office Tuesday that required her to pay a \$100 fine. Jeff was disqualified in late March for violating the state's Campaign Reporting Act. Reportedly, she failed to pay upwards of \$1,050 stemming from matters over the past two years.

"They had no legal authority to do this," Jeff's attorney, Zach Cook, said April 5 after a hearing in Santa Fe District Court.

Jeff argued in court papers that Secretary of State Brad Winter, a Republican appointed by Gov. Susana Martinez in December after Dianna Duran left office, went beyond the scope of his authority in removing her from the ballot.

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Cook is a Republican from Ruidoso who serves the state House of Representatives.

"The statute allows for a correction," he said. "As of right now, she is on the ballot and listed in a qualifying position."

The situation almost took another turn for the worst for Jeff after incumbent District 22 senator Benny Shendo, D-Jemez Pueblo, filed a motion in Santa Fe District Court stipulating that Jeff does not live in Crownpoint, but somewhere near Albuquerque. That motion was tossed when District Court Judge Sarah Singleton signed off on the agreement between Jeff and the Secretary of State's Office. Shendo is a first-term legislator.

"The race is on and we won't be filing any more anything regarding Jeff's candidacy," Shendo said during a telephone conversation April 6. "My campaign goes on."

Jeff, a former Public Regulation Commission staff assistant under fellow Crownpoint native and former state Senator Lynda Lovejoy, has come under fire over the years for siding with Republicans on key votes, such as a vote against the 2014 state budget.

Vice President Joe Biden called Jeff from Washington about three years ago regarding a vote on a constitutional amendment to raise the minimum wage. She did not vote in that situation, which prompted the telephone call from Biden.

Jeff previously served District 5 of the N.M. House of Representatives, but lost that seat as a write-in candidate in a landslide to Wonda Johnson of Church Rock.

Amy Bailey, general counsel with the Secretary of State's Office, said two weeks ago that Jeff was not in conformity with New Mexico's campaign reporting law, thus the ballot disqualification.

District 22 includes Bernalillo, Rio Arriba, McKinley, San Juan and Sandoval counties. A state primary is set for June 7. The general election is Nov. 8.

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