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## In Case You Missed It

### **King attempted cover up of allegations against Herrera, attorney says**

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### **King attempted cover up of allegations against Herrera, attorney says**

*New Mexico Independent*

By [Trip Jennings](#)

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Read this story online at: <http://newmexicoindependent.com/62250/king-attempted-cover-up-of-allegations-against-herrera-attorney-says>

[Attorney General Gary King](#) attempted to cover up allegations of wrongdoing by [Secretary of State Mary Herrera](#), an Española attorney charged Thursday.

Attorney Rudy Martin said his client, A.J. Salazar, spoke to the FBI last week after turning over telephone numbers and potential witnesses to state Attorney General (AG) investigators five months ago, about the time he quit as Herrera’s state elections director and [alleged wrongdoing](#) in a resignation letter.

“The two (AG) investigators did their job,” Martin told The Independent. **“Gary tried to play politics and swept everything under the rug” to help Herrera and other Democrats in an election year, Martin said.** That lack of action ultimately led two of his other clients — Herrera’s office manager, Manny Vildasol, and her public information

officer, James Flores – to also go to the FBI with allegations of wrongdoing, Martin added.

Vildasol and Flores are both on paid administrative leave and under investigation by the state, agency officials said Thursday.

**“All three thought they had to meet with FBI because Gary King is playing politics,” Martin said of Salazar, Vildasol and Flores. King “has a responsibility to the state of New Mexico, and not necessarily to the Democratic Party. I am a Democrat myself.”**

A spokesman for King disputed Martin’s charges and called them election-year mud-slinging .

“What Mr. Martin is saying is strictly a product of his own imagination,” Phil Sisneros said. “We have it on good authority that Mr. Martin and his client, Mr. Salazar, ... are working for opponents of the secretary (Herrera) and Attorney General King. I suspect this is their way of stirring up trouble.”

Martin responded, “If by working for them they mean reporting criminal activity and reporting on an AG who is sitting on his butt, then I guess we are. ... doing what is right and speaking out against what is wrong, when was that ever wrong in American society?”

Martin went on to deny that he and Salazar are working to elect Republicans [Dianna Duran](#) and [Matt Chandler](#), Herrera’s and King’s GOP opponents, respectively.

“I’ve never met Mr. Chandler. I know his people have contacted my office,” Martin said.. “But I can’t go out campaigning. I am staying neutral on this one.” But, he said, “I am not supporting Mary Herrera with her character at all.”

### **Allegations are latest blow to Herrera in an ongoing saga**

Thursday’s exchange between Martin and the Attorney General’s office represented the latest in a highly unusual turn-of-events revolving around the re-election effort of first-term New Mexico’s Secretary of State.

The agency has been in turmoil for months, but only as the November election nears have the steady drumbeat of allegations by current and former top aides at the agency started to test Herrera’s mettle as a political candidate.

Salazar, Vildasol and Flores all have alleged wrongdoing at the agency, ranging from forcing employees to solicit “sponsorships or donations” from businesses that contract with the state to possible kickbacks on contracts and having office employees campaign for Herrera on state time, Martin said.

Herrera on Thursday said the allegations were “blatantly false and ridiculous” and politically motivated, the Associated Press reported.

The news service went on to report that Herrera refused further comment after reading a brief statement and walked away Thursday as reporters asked questions at a news conference.

### **Current and former top aides report wrongdoing**

Salazar quit as elections director under Herrera months ago, creating a brief maelstrom of negative press for Herrera when he alleged wrongdoing in the agency in a lengthy resignation letter.

Vildasol and Flores, meanwhile, are currently on paid administrative leave while the state investigates them, Deputy Secretary of State Francisco Trujillo II said Thursday.

“There are two separate investigations respective to each employee,” Trujillo said. Asked the subject of the inquiries, Trujillo responded, “It’s a personnel issue.”

Martin claimed that the investigations are retaliation against Vildasol and Flores for going to Herrera with concerns about the alleged wrongdoing.

“These are top officials who advised Mary Herrera about the conduct they saw as unlawful and instead of doing something about it she decided to strip them of their duties,” Martin said of Vildasol and Flores. “She has decided to put greed and unethical conduct before her duties.”

While the allegations create bad press for the incumbent, it is difficult to gauge the impact, if any, of the accusations and the office turmoil on Herrera’s re-election chances. A few high-profile Democrats like Santa Fe County Clerk [Valerie Espinoza](#), have come out in support of Herrera’s GOP opponent, Duran.

That hasn’t shaken Herrera’s confidence, Trujillo said.

The secretary “is confident in her re-election campaign,” Trujillo said. “She is very proud of her record. She’s had three very efficient elections. And she has had many cost saving ideas that have taken effect and have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer money.”

Duran, Herrera’s Republican opponent, said she has little time to pay attention to Herrera’s troubles while traveling the state to promote her own candidacy. But, she said, her supporters keep her up to date.

“I am aware of the things that are happening, at least most of them,” Duran said.

**“My campaign will continue to focus on what the people of New Mexico want and what I can provide – integrity and honesty,” Duran said. “We need more transparency. We need a Secretary of State who is accountable to the people, someone who answers questions.”**

Then Duran added, “I’m concerned like everyone else and not happy on what we are hearing.”

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