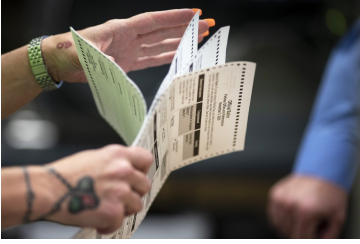


Jury finds former Milwaukee election official guilty of obtaining fake absentee ballots

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A jury found a former Milwaukee election official accused of obtaining fake absentee ballots guilty Wednesday of misconduct in office and fraud, rejecting her arguments that she was trying to expose vulnerabilities in the state's election system.

Prosecutors charged Kimberly Zapata in November 2022 with one felony count of misconduct in public office and three misdemeanor counts of election fraud. The jury found her guilty in Milwaukee County Circuit Court on all four counts after starting deliberations Wednesday morning.

Zapata faces up to five years behind bars when she's sentenced on May 2.

Zapata was serving as deputy director at the Milwaukee Election Commission in October 2022 when she used her work-issued laptop to obtain three military absentee ballots using fake names and Social Security numbers, according to a criminal complaint. She sent the ballots to Republican state Rep. Janel Brandtjen, an election conspiracy theorist, two weeks before the state's gubernatorial and legislative elections.

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