

EDITORIAL: Claims about DA Reyna's political favors should worry all law-abiding citizens

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In the criminal justice system, the district attorney has more far-reaching powers than any other figure, given that some 95 percent of felony convictions arise from guilty pleas, resulting in prosecutorial discretion rather than that of judges or juries. Thus, it's critical that whoever occupies the post of district attorney be beyond reproach on all ethical and moral levels. And that's why the sworn affidavit by one of McLennan County District Attorney Abel Reyna's former prosecutors should be exceedingly worrisome to every law-abiding citizen.

Greg Davis, a veteran prosecutor who put 18 people on death row before going to work for Reyna as a top assistant in 2011, said in an affidavit filed Friday that Reyna has dismissed criminal cases for friends and major campaign donors for political and personal gain and that Reyna remains under federal investigation. Davis attributes his resignation to his belief "neither politics nor wealth should play any role in prosecutorial decisions and Reyna's actions were completely antithetical to my beliefs and the oath that all prosecutors take to do justice."

A fair reading of this affidavit leaves one stunned at the allegations of courthouse cronyism and corruption: in effect dismissal of a Reyna campaign supporter's DWI charge (with a blood-alcohol content nearly twice the legal limit); the dropping of a drug charge against a man whose mother employed Reyna's wife and was a Reyna campaign donor; misusing the Pre-Trial Intervention Program to dispose of cases not typically in its province; and appointment of "special prosecutors" to dismiss cases for friends and supporters such as one who pressed Reyna to make a DWI charge "go away." And so on.

If such a claim came from a motorcycle gang member, one might confidently dismiss it after little inquiry. But when an abundance of such claims comes from a seasoned prosecutor who once worked for Reyna, it demands the closest scrutiny, which may or may not be coming from an FBI investigation into Reyna's activities. In his affidavit, Davis says he and fellow prosecutor Michael Jarrett at one point confronted Reyna about such unethical practices, only to be told: "Never get in my f---ing business again."

Granted, Davis' damning affidavit arises from Twin Peaks defendant Matthew Clendennen's fervent effort to recuse Reyna from prosecuting his organized crime case.

One argument holds that Reyna in effect usurped the authority of Waco police on the ground immediately after the deadly 2015 Twin Peaks shootout, compelling police to shelve their capital murder investigation in favor of Reyna's questionable organized-crime scheme — enough to have 177 bikers thrown in county jail on identical charges and with dubious million-dollar bonds. Question: Was this decision by Reyna yet another case of political opportunism gone wild?

Some of this may be resolved in another inquiry into what police and Reyna have previously testified about the Twin Peaks investigation and just who was running the show. But Davis' other claims are just as disturbing if not more so. Dropping prosecution cases for donors and friends, if true, suggests a political swamp exists in McLennan County that's in dire need of draining.