

Insurer paid out \$40,000 for District Attorney Michael Renteria's Sexual Discrimination Case.

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(Editor's Note: Names have been changed to protect privacy.)

In documents obtained by IRPA, it shows that the insurer for the 6th Judicial District paid out \$40,000 to a woman attorney for sexual discrimination done by Michael Renteria. When Renteria became the district attorney, he hired a male attorney for \$109,000 while the woman attorney Portia*, already working there, was only paid \$101,000. They had comparable duties, although Portia handled 162 cases versus 40 for him.*

Portia's job was to handle all violent crimes including crimes against the police and juvenile crimes. An experience prosecutor, she was considered highly qualified by law enforcement and worked closely with police.

From the complaint:

"From the moment DA Renteria took office he told us that we could not speak with the prior DA. Women are referred to as *mijas* and girls. (When a father or grandfather calls a woman *mija*, it's a term of endearment. When an employer does it, the term is belittling and inappropriate.) The Silver City office is told by the DA that he wishes we were more like the Deming Office. **

The complaint spells out two years of verbal abuse and harassment. In the Spring of 2021, Renteria accuses Portia of campaigning against him and screams at her for over two-hours until she's in tears. There are multiple incidents of her being screamed at over the course of her employment at the 6th Judicial District.

When Portia asks the male attorneys if Renteria does the same to them, they say no. They are disturbed by the DA's treatment of her and believe it's because he feels threatened.

There is also reference in the complaint that Renteria was calling a woman Silver City police officer *mija* and screaming at her. The officer was so disturbed by the

incident that she filed a complaint against Renteria with the NM State Bar's Disciplinary Board. Renteria denied all the allegations which were witnessed by the district's office manager. However the report states: "His (Renteria's) inner circle is so fearful that they will not speak honestly about the multiple incidents that have occurred. "

The board did not sustain an ethical violation, but did state the DA should not be calling women mijas. Renteria has never ceased calling women mijas or girls after this caution by the Disciplinary Board.

In February 2022, Portia is working with a sheriff's detective on a high-profile homicide case. Renteria is enraged that this particular detective is working on the investigation. "He will not allow him to testify and says he thinks the officer will find a way to *sabotage* it. " This detective did not support Renteria in his bid to become District Attorney

Renteria calls the sheriff and asks that the detective be pulled off the case. Portia tells Renteria that she can't get through the trial without the detective's testimony. The DA directs Portia to limit what the detective testifies to. Renteria very rarely attends court, but he shows up for the hearing, pulls Portia aside and tells her he is watching what she allows the detective to testify to.

On May 5, 2022, Portia quits her job after giving two weeks' notice. On May 26, she files a seven page EEOC complaint. On September 29th, she receives notice that she will be paid \$40,000 by the State of New Mexico's Risk Management Division. Part of the agreement is that she will not make disparaging remarks about District Attorney Michael Renteria or any of his employees.

Two other women also made EEOC complaints, but they were denied. There complaints were not as detailed. A prior article, *Employee Problems at the District Attorney's Office* outlines other issues.

*DA Renteria now makes \$156,465 while his two deputy attorneys make \$144,204 and \$123,600 now. [Home - New Mexico Sunshine Portal \(nm.gov\)](https://www.nmsunshine.com/)

** Three of the attorneys in the Deming office have recently quit.