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**ANOTHER NOTARY PUBLIC CONVICTED OF CRIMINAL
DECEPTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES**

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez announced today the sentencing of an Upper Valley notary public accused of engaging in Deceptive Business Practices.

María Estela Soriano, doing business as “ITB Income Tax and Bookkeeping Services,” pled guilty on Tuesday, February 27, 2007 to one count of engaging in Deceptive Business Practices for failing to provide legal services she was paid to perform. The trial took place this morning at the County Court at Law #2.

After receiving the guilty plea from Ms. Soriano, Judge Julie González sentenced her to 1 year probation and to serve 100 hours of community service. She was also ordered to pay \$785 compensation to the victim, and to pay a \$300 dollar fine.

According to the complaint affidavit, Ms. Soriano took \$785 from a Lower Valley resident to carry out legal services, including filing immigration paperwork, filing income taxes, and to process a title property transfer, but the services were never rendered. This is the second notary public sentenced in the last 2 weeks in El Paso for engaging in deceptive business practices.

County Attorney José R. Rodríguez reminds the community that Texas law expressly prohibits a notary public from offering any type of legal services including assistance to fill immigration forms. Ignorance of the law is not an acceptable defense in court. “The community, and particularly all the notaries, should know by now that the law does not allow them to offer legal services. We will continue to prosecute to the full extent of the law all individuals who take advantage of the good faith of local residents,” said El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodriguez.

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Maria Soriano