

Publication: Santa Fe New Mexican; **Date:** Oct 29, 2005; **Section:** Local news; **Page Number:** 19

State Democratic Party comptroller, treasurer resign

Finance expert was brought in to mend problems with Federal Election Commission; activists call his departure 'major loss'

By Steve Terrell The New Mexican Contact Steve Terrell at 986-3037 or sterrell@sfnewmexican.com.

A finance expert brought into the state Democratic Party in 1998 to fix some serious problems it was having with the Federal Election Commission retired this week.

Some party activists say the departure of state party comptroller Brian Monaghan is a major loss for Democrats, still hurting from the loss of the state's electoral votes to Republican George W. Bush after last year's presidential election.

"Without Brian, I don't see how (the party) can have a coordinated campaign," Gideon Elliot, the party's former deputy executive director, said.

"I've gotten to the point in my life that this is what I want to do," Monaghan, 65, said Friday of his retirement.

Also stepping down this week was the state party's treasurer, Judy Baker. According to several Democrats, she could no longer remain a party official because she was recently promoted by the Internal Revenue Service.

Monaghan was hired by Diane Denish — then the state party chairwoman, now lieutenant governor — to straighten out a legal problem with the FEC after the 1997 congressional election. That year, Democrat Eric Serna lost to Republican Bill Redmond in the special election for the District 3 seat vacated by Bill Richardson.

At issue before the FEC was whether the state party could use a mix of federally permissible campaign funds and nonpermitted contributions to pay for get-out-the-vote efforts on Serna's behalf.

The commission also questioned corporate contributions and money from political committees not registered with the FEC that the party accepted in early 1998.

In May of this year, state Democratic chairman John Wertheim announced the party's problems with the FCC had been settled. The party paid a fine of \$60,000.

Monaghan is one of several Democratic Party staffers to step down this year. Others are Elliot, finance director Sarah Rosenzweig, volunteer coordinator Marci Youngmark and state party affairs director Terri Holland, who resigned to become executive director of the Bernalillo County Democratic Party.