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FEATURED TOP STORY

# Narvaiza elected sheriff of Elko County

SUZANNE FEATHERSTON [sfeatherston@elkodaily.com](mailto:sfeatherston@elkodaily.com) 16 hrs ago

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Sgt. Aitor Narvaiza celebrates news of his lead over incumbent Sheriff Jim Pitts as Elko County reported election returns for the city of Elko on Tuesday night.

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ELKO — Aitor Narvaiza will be the new sheriff in Elko County.

With the Elko County Clerk reporting all precincts except Wells and West Wendover just after 9:15 p.m., Narvaiza had 55 percent of the vote compared with 45 percent for incumbent Sheriff Jim Pitts on Nov. 6.

“It’s only 1,000 votes, but it’s a big lead,” Narvaiza said.

Pitts served as sheriff for eight years during a 35-plus-year law enforcement career.

“I guess congratulations. It looks like he won,” Pitts said. “I had 36 good years with Elko County and the police department. I will have to see what is next.”

Narvaiza, a sergeant with the sheriff’s office, said that becoming sheriff was the logical next step after 23 years in law enforcement and that he’d promised his Basque immigrant father who died seven years ago that he would run for election.

“I feel good. I wish my dad was here. It would have made it awesome,” Narvaiza said, wiping away tears as he celebrated among friends and family at the Elko Basque Club. “He wouldn’t have said much, but he would have smiled.”

Born in Spain, Narvaiza emigrated to the U.S. when he was 8 years old. Two of his sisters also pursued law enforcement careers.

“It’s in our blood, I think,” he told the Elko Daily Free Press when he filed for election. “I’m living the American dream. It’s only here in the U.S. that a guy like me can actually run for sheriff. That’s amazing. Just an old-style emigrant: Work hard and take care of business.”

During the election cycle, Narvaiza said he would bring significant increases to technology, organization and culture in the department.

He pledged to evaluate and improve staffing patterns to improve community safety; balance the budget; increase deputy presence at school; and require advanced training for drug enforcement and patrol deputies, according to his candidate statement. The sheriff-elect also plans to make advances in accountability, mental health assistance, accessibility and community notification.

“It’s been a long eight months,” Narvaiza said, reflecting on a campaign full of going door to door, learning about voters’ concerns and answering questions. “It’s a big relief, win or lose.”

Narvaiza will be sworn into office on Jan. 7, 2019. The sheriff’s salary, defined by Nevada Revised Statutes, is \$107,707.

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**Suzanne Featherston**

Mining Quarterly - Mining, state and county reporter

