

NEWS

Richfield man among 6 accused of illegal voting in Duluth, Iron Range

By **PIONEER PRESS** | news@pioneerpress.com

PUBLISHED: August 17, 2011 at 11:01 p.m. | UPDATED: November 12, 2015 at 7:57 p.m.

Six people have recently been charged in St. Louis County with a felony crime that is rarely seen on a Northeastern Minnesota court docket: “Voting while ineligible.”

It’s a felony punishable by a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine, but a conviction most likely will result in a probationary sentence.

Under Minnesota law, a person is ineligible to vote if his or her civil rights had not been restored after being convicted of treason, or any felony, or while under a guardianship in which a court order revoked the ward’s right to vote, or if found by a court of law to be legally incompetent.

All six of the people charged – four at the St. Louis County District Court in Duluth and two at the St. Louis County District Court in Hibbing – are accused of being convicted felons when they allegedly voted in the November 2008 general election.

“We discovered these cases left over from the previous administration,” St. Louis County Attorney Mark Rubin said. “We’ve tried to address the backlog. We reviewed them all and charged those that were deemed to have probable cause to charge.”

Antonio Vassel Brown, 48, is being transported from the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Lino Lakes, where he’s serving a 24-month sentence for the sale of crack, to make his initial appearance on the ineligible voter charge in Duluth on Aug. 30.

St. Louis County Auditor election department records show that Brown voted in the November 2008 general election. According to the criminal complaint against him, Brown has been convicted of multiple felonies in multiple states. He told an investigator that his probation officer told him that he could vote because “no one checks up on it.” The probation officer was interviewed by police and said that he never told Brown such a thing. He said he typically tells probationers about their loss of such civil rights.

Lisa May Burleson, 34, of Hibbing, is accused of voting after pleading guilty to felony theft in 2006. She was placed on five years probation. According to the criminal complaint, Burleson told a Hibbing police officer that she had no idea that she could not vote and did not remember reading the probation agreement stating that she would lose her civil right to vote while on felony probation.

Kay Arola, executive director and chief probation officer of Arrowhead Regional Corrections, said that when probationers who have committed felonies are given their conditions of probation, they also are advised of losing their right to vote and the other civil rights they give up – such as possessing a firearm.

Fred Friedman, Northeastern Minnesota’s chief public defender, said he believes probation officers inform probationers of the civil rights they’ve lost, and probation officers also inform the court when the probation is over and the right to vote is restored.

“People get into trouble voting before their civil rights are restored when they think they are not in jail and ‘I get to vote.’ But their probation has to be over and I believe probation tells them this,” he said.

Murdock Francis McLeod Jr., 22; Alfreda Denise Bowman, 46; and Lavern Antoinette Bowman, 40, all of Duluth; and Adam Charles Bromander, 31, of Richfield, also are charged with voting while ineligible.