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Southern District of West Virginia

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Mingo's Former Chief Magistrate Pleads Guilty To Federal Election Fraud

Dallas L. Toler is the fourth former Mingo official to plead guilty in connection with federal corruption probe

CHARLESTON, W.Va. —Mingo County's former chief magistrate pleaded guilty in Charleston federal court to voter registration fraud, U.S. Attorney Booth Goodwin announced today. Dallas L. Toler, 45, is the fourth former Mingo County official to plead guilty to charges in connection with a federal corruption investigation.

U.S. Attorney Booth Goodwin said, "Corruption is the biggest threat to democracy. In Mingo County, corruption was an epidemic. Once again in this investigation we have a judge engaging in corruption—this time corruption of the electoral process so that he and his cohorts could keep their jobs." Goodwin continued, "The people of Mingo County are tired of these shenanigans, and we'll continue to do what's necessary to help them."

In or about April 2012, Toler, who at the time was a member of a political campaigning and fundraising group known as "Team Mingo," participated with other individuals in an effort to identify potential voters who would support Team Mingo's candidates in the 2012 primary election. Toler was a candidate to retain the office of magistrate.

Toler, a landlord of several rental properties in and around Mingo County, went to one of his rental properties in April 2012 to collect rent. During the visit to his rental unit, Toler encountered an individual who he learned was on probation for a felony offense. In a later encounter, Toler told the individual that he would arrange for the individual to be registered to vote in the 2012 primary election. Toler knew that the individual was on probation for a felony and was ineligible to vote. Toler later procured the completion and submission of a voter registration application in the name of the known person. Toler also caused the application to be completed and caused it to include a false statement that the known person was not on probation for a felony. On or about April 23, 2012, after receiving a voter registration card as the result of Toler's actions, the known person unlawfully voted in the 2012 primary election in Mingo County.

United States District Court Judge Thomas E. Johnston presided over today's plea hearing and will sentence Toler on March 10, 2014. Toler faces five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Toler previously resigned as chief magistrate of Mingo County in October. As part of his federal guilty plea, Toler's plea agreement with

the Office of the U.S. Attorney required him to resign as a Mingo County magistrate and never seek elected office again.

Toler was previously appointed as magistrate in January 2012 by former Mingo County Circuit Judge Michael Thornsby.

Thornsby, 57, pleaded guilty in October for his role in a scheme to violate the constitutional rights of an individual to cover up evidence of illegal drug use and other misconduct by late Mingo County Sheriff Eugene Crum. Thornsby faces up to 10 years in prison when he is sentenced on January 13, 2014. Another former Mingo County official, C. Michael Sparks, 44, previously pleaded guilty on Nov. 18 in connection with a conspiracy to deprive a Mingo County resident of his constitutional rights. Sparks, Mingo County's former prosecuting attorney, faces a year in prison when he is sentenced on February 24, 2014.

In a separate matter, former Mingo County Commissioner David Baisden pleaded guilty in connection with a scheme to illegally extort a discount from a Mingo County tire store. Baisden, 66, resigned from the Mingo County Commission in October. Baisden faces up to 20 years in prison when he is sentenced on January 14, 2014.

The investigation is being conducted by the FBI and the West Virginia State Police. Counsel to the United States Attorney Steven Ruby and Assistant United States Attorney Haley Bunn are handling the prosecution.

[Click here](#) to view a copy of the plea agreement

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