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Woman pleads guilty in St. Louis vote fraud case

BY JIM SALTER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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ST. LOUIS — A former get-out-the-vote worker accused of submitting false and forged voter registration cards pleaded guilty on Tuesday to a federal mail fraud charge.

Deidra Humphrey, 44, of East St. Louis, Ill., worked last year as a voter registration recruiter for Missouri Progressive Vote Coalition (Missouri Pro-Vote) and for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now.

U.S. Attorney Catherine Hanaway announced the plea deal in a news release, saying Humphrey submitted false and forged voter registration cards to Missouri Pro-Vote, which unknowingly submitted those cards to election boards in St. Louis city and St. Louis County.

Hanaway said Humphrey submitted the fraudulent cards to get money for work she didn't actually complete.

Under the deal, Humphrey pleaded guilty to mail fraud, rather than the two felony counts of voter registration fraud she had faced.

Humphrey's public defender, Lee Lawless, said his client never intended for the falsely registered to vote, that she was just submitting the cards to make money and that her employer was the victim.

"I think that this charge fairly reflects what took place, as opposed to the vote fraud charge," he said.

Missouri Pro-Vote Executive Director Joan Suarez said the organization fired Humphrey after learning of the allegations and worked closely with investigators.



"This agency has been so clean, and it's really painful when this kind of thing happens," Suarez said. "We've had an exemplary effort in terms of our voter registration efforts."

Humphrey worked as an organizer for Missouri Pro-Vote. Suarez said she didn't know how many false cards were submitted. She said that while workers had goals for the number of voter registration cards turned in, they are paid by the hour, not by the number of cards submitted.

ACORN's Midwest director, Jeff Ordower, has said Humphrey worked for ACORN for 12 days in late June and early July, before leaving voluntarily to work for Missouri Pro-Vote. Ordower said ACORN, in its own investigation, determined that Humphrey violated the group's procedures. ACORN reported its findings to the St. Louis County Board of Elections in September.

A federal grand jury indicted Humphrey in January. She could face up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 at sentencing, set for June 11.

