

LOCAL

Man gets probation for illegally voting

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ZANESVILLE - As a non-citizen, Awais Jamil should not have registered to vote in the U.S.

But the government, which knew he was not a citizen, should not have mailed him a voter registration packet, argued Assistant Muskingum County Prosecutor John Litle.

Jamil, 29, of Roseville, previously pleaded guilty in Muskingum County Common Pleas Court to illegal voting, a fourth-degree felony. He was sentenced Monday to one year of probation.

Litle argued in court that the circumstances under which Jamil voted constituted the least serious form of the offense. He has no criminal history, the offense is unlikely to happen again and he showed genuine remorse.

Jamil honestly provided documentation to the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles indicating that he was not a U.S. citizen, according to a sentencing memorandum filed by the prosecutor's office. Yet, the government mailed a voter registration packet to his home anyway.

"Sending such a packet can only be categorized as a misleading government activity," the memo stated.

While that doesn't excuse Jamil's decision to check a box stating that he was a U.S. citizen, the voter registration packet is something he never should have gotten in the first place, Litle said in the memo.

Eighty-two non-citizens voted in at least one election in Ohio since 2015, according to a February 2017 release from the Ohio secretary of state's office. In the investigation, officials identified illegal voters through driver's license or state ID applications.

In the sentencing memo, Litle said the investigation by Secretary of State Jon Husted's office was too limited.

"Investigators in that process did not compare a database of all registered legal aliens against the Ohio voter rolls, which would have yielded more illegal votes," the memo stated. They did

not compare a database of all (or any) known illegal aliens against the voter rolls which would have yielded more illegal votes. They did not compare the voter rolls against social security numbers issued to non-citizen aliens, which would have yielded more illegal votes."

In the release by Husted's office, Husted acknowledged that likely more non-citizens are still in the voter database, but the state doesn't have access to data like non-citizens' social security numbers, which is maintained by the federal government.

Jamil previously told the court that he was from Pakistan and knew he could be deported as a result of his guilty plea.

Common Pleas Judge Mark Fleegle gave Jamil an underlying sentence of 14 months in prison.

"Do what you're supposed to do, and I won't see you again," Fleegle said, "and in a year, you'll be released."

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