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Woman admits '09 vote fraudulent

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Deshara M. McKinney, 26, formerly of S. James Road on the East Side, was placed on probation for two years by Judge Mark Serrott. If she violates probation, McKinney will be sent to prison for two years. She also must complete 40 hours of community service, pay court costs and reimburse the county for the cost of extraditing her from Michigan.

McKinney pleaded guilty to two counts of falsifying signatures on applications for absentee ballots and one count of failure to appear, Prosecutor Ron O'Brien announced yesterday.

She worked as a canvasser for FieldWork, a company hired to promote passing a 2009 ballot issue to bring casinos to Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Toledo. The issue won with 53 percent of the vote.

Investigators determined that McKinney forged the signatures of registered voters on two absentee-ballot applications.

A warrant was issued for McKinney when she failed to appear for a court date in January 2010. She was arrested last month in Washtenaw, Mich., and extradited, O'Brien said.

Serrott sentenced her on Wednesday to time served for the failure-to-appear charge, crediting her with the 25 days she spent in jail before her plea.

Although elections officials provided investigators with several other suspicious forms in 2009, O'Brien said no one else will be charged in the case.

“We got handwriting samples from other suspects believed to have done the same things,” he said, “but the handwriting expert could not positively identify the questioned signatures with the suspect signatures.”

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