

Attorney's fraud sentence reduced



(<https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/author/bniweb/>).

By Staff Reports (<https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/author/bniweb/>)

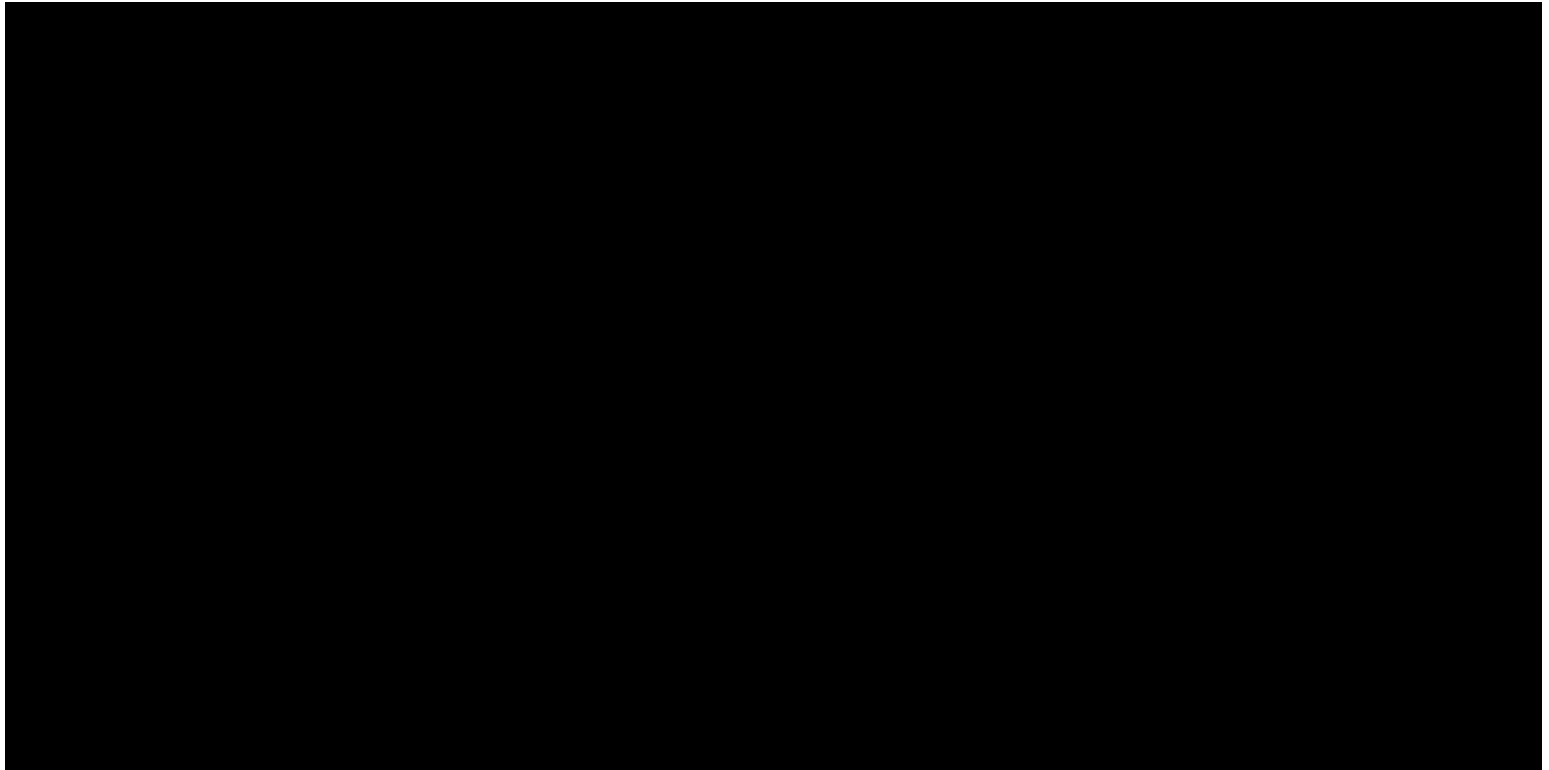
Email the author (<mailto:bniweb@boonenewspapers.com>).

Published 12:00 am Wednesday, July 14, 1999

A Natchez attorney convicted of voter fraud in the 1991 Wilkinson County supervisors election has received a reduced sentence.

Sandra Sewell was sentenced to eight years and a \$2,000 fine in July 1993 after being convicted on eight counts of felony voter fraud.

Because that sentence on two of the counts did not comply with state law, Sewell will now serve only five years and pay the \$2,000 fine.



"You can't impose both the time and the fine," said Ed Snyder, assistant attorney general and one of two prosecutors who handled the case.

The new sentence removes the jail time off the first two counts, Snyder said. Sewell's sentence on the other six counts was not changed and is included in the five years.

Sewell was found guilty of helping incumbent Calvin McFarland, who was running for the Wilkinson County Board of 16 Supervisors, commit voter fraud. Sewell is believed to have notarized absentee ballots for him.

Sewell's appeal to the state Supreme Court failed.

"The crime of which Sandra Sewell has been convicted is serious and goes to the heart of our election process," the court wrote.

McFarland, who lost the election by 39 votes, is believed to have requested absentee ballots for other voters without their permission.

"One of the witnesses testified McFarland was bringing in absentee ballots (applications) in bulk," Snyder said.

Following this election, 14 people in Wilkinson County were indicted for voter fraud, many of whom pleaded guilty to the charges. McFarland also

Following this election, 14 people in Wilkinson County were indicted for voter fraud, many of whom pleaded guilty to the charges. McFarland also was indicted, stood trial and was convicted.

“In the election of 1991, there were a lot of abuses of absentee ballots,” Snyder said.

But even he admits the Wilkinson County situation was unusual.

“I’m not familiar with any other cases of that magnitude,” Snyder said.

During the trial, witnesses said some absentee ballots were cast without the signature of the person who was said to have been voting.

Frank Hicks, the state’s handwriting expert, testified in court that McFarland signed these ballots for the voters and that Sewell notarized them.

The absentee ballots requested by McFarland often never made it to the voter.

“Some ballots were mailed to a relative of his,” Snyder said.

Sewell, who also has been disbarred, is to report to the Wilkinson County Sheriff’s Department by noon today to begin serving her sentence.

COPYRIGHT

© 2020, Mississippi’s Best Community Newspaper