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Local Politician Convicted of Fraud

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The former mayor of the tiny municipality of Vernon and his wife were convicted Friday of voter registration fraud and fraudulent voting.

[Leonis Malburg](#), 80, who had been mayor of Vernon for more than 50 years before resigning this summer, and [Dominica Malburg](#), 83, did not live in Vernon, [Los Angeles Superior Court](#) Judge Michael Johnson found in a non-jury trial.

Leonis Malburg was convicted of conspiracy to commit a crime, being a public official aiding illegal voting, falsifying a declaration of candidacy, voter registration fraud, false voter registration, perjury under oath, fraudulent voting and assisting an unqualified voter.

Dominica Malburg was convicted of conspiracy, false voter registration and fraudulent voting.

The former mayor was acquitted of a second count of assisting an unqualified voter. The judge found that Malburg helped his son, John, receive a ballot, but it was left in his son's Hancock Park home.

The judge said Malburg knew he was ineligible to be a candidate and knew he and his wife were ineligible to vote in Vernon. Johnson also said the evidence showed Dominica Malburg's presence in the city of Vernon was "rare," and that she was focused on her home and family activities in Hancock Park.

Authorities said fewer than 100 people voted in the April 2006 election in Vernon.

The two are to be sentenced Jan. 21, but the judge indicated he was not inclined to order them to serve any time behind bars.

Leonis Malburg's attorney, [Anthony Murray](#), contended the evidence showed his client was "domiciled in Vernon" and intends to stay there.

"If there was ever a person who intended to remain somewhere, it's Mr. Malburg," Murray told the judge in his final argument.

Dominica Malburg's attorney, Michael Lightfoot, also argued his client should be acquitted, saying she



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“believed that was her home and that’s what all the evidence suggests.”

Deputy District Attorney Max Huntsman countered that the two conspired to “create the illusion that they lived in Vernon.”

In making his ruling, the judge said the prosecution had proven “the defendants were not domiciled in Vernon” in 2005, while noting there probably was a time when they were living there.

Leonis Malburg’s presence in Vernon was “purely related to business” involving his personal business and his role in the city government, and his use of an apartment in Vernon was “purely for convenience in carrying out his business activities,” Johnson said.

The judge said he didn’t believe the defendants’ claims they intended for Vernon to be their permanent home, noting that “they knew the rules.”

“The defendants’ corrupt intent is supported by a great deal of evidence,” Johnson said, noting that Leonis Malburg helped his son get an apartment on 50th Street in Vernon and to register to vote at that location though the younger Malburg “did not use or live in the apartment in any way.”

The judge noted the bedding was still in the original plastic packaging and there was no refrigerator or telephone answering machine, and that the apartment was “simply gathering dust and cobwebs.”

The two were initially charged in November 2006 by the District Attorney’s Public Integrity Division several months after the first contested election in Vernon in what the judge said was more than 25 years, then indicted in October 2007.

John Malburg, who had been charged along with his parents, pleaded no contest April 30 to perjury and voter registration fraud.

Weeks earlier, he had been sentenced to eight years in prison for continuous sexual abuse of a child and using a minor for a commercial sex act.

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