

California state senator sentenced to 90 days in jail serves about an hour

By **Reid Wilson**

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Correction: An earlier version of this post inaccurately used the word “prison” instead of the word “jail” in several places. A prison is run by the state, while a jail is run by a county.

A California state senator who resigned his seat after being convicted of eight counts of perjury and voter fraud and sentenced to 90 days in jail has been freed before he even entered the jail system.

Roderick Wright was convicted in January, four years after a Los Angeles County grand jury charged him with lying about his address on his voter registration and campaign documents, and with voting fraudulently in five different elections.

Wright registered to vote at an address in Inglewood owned by his common-law stepmother, while prosecutors said he actually lived in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles. Registering to vote in Inglewood allowed Wright to run for and win office in his Inglewood-based district; California law requires state lawmakers to live within their districts.

After his conviction, Wright faced up to eight years in county jail, but in September, a judge sentenced him to just 90 days and barred him from ever holding public office again. On Friday, Wright reported to the Los Angeles County jail to begin serving his term.

But Los Angeles’s jail system is overflowing with so many inmates that they have no room for a nonviolent offender with no prior convictions. Wright was processed, booked and released after just over an hour.

A spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County sheriff’s department told the Sacramento Bee that Wright received no special treatment.

“A lot of people are not serving 100 percent of their time because of overcrowding,” the spokeswoman, Nicole Nishida, told the Bee.

Wright will still be required to perform 1,500 hours of community service and three years’ probation under the terms of his conviction. He resigned his seat in the state Senate after being sentenced; a special election to fill the remainder of his term is set for Dec. 9.

Wright is one of three Democratic state senators to face charges this year. State Sen. Ronald Calderon (D) was indicted on federal corruption charges for allegedly accepting almost \$100,000 in bribes, meals and golf outings. In March, state Sen. Leland Yee (D) was arrested for allegedly offering to sell illegal weapons to an undercover federal agent.

Calderon and Yee have pleaded not guilty to the charges. But their absences cost Democrats, who held a super majority in the state Senate. Without Wright, Calderon and Yee, Republicans had enough votes to filibuster legislation they oppose.