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More vote fraud charges

VOTE FRAUD: Seven people charged in 41 counts stemming from 2003 primaries

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HAMMOND | The fallout continues for those involved in the election that led to the ouster of former East Chicago Mayor Robert Pastrick.

Indiana Attorney Steve Carter and Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter announced Friday they filed 41 criminal vote fraud charges against seven people in connection with 2003 primary elections.

Six of those charged are in connection with the East Chicago Mayoral primary that pitted Pastrick against George Pabey.

Pastrick won the election, but lost the battle for mayor when the Indiana Supreme Court ordered that election redone. He subsequently lost to Pabey in October 2004.

At the time, two of those charged worked for East Chicago. Larry Battle was employed for the parks department; Florentino Guillen for the schools.

Brian Berkman is the sole person charged in connection with voting in the 2003 Democratic Primary that pitted Deborah Riga and Kenneth Anderson for Schererville town judge. Riga won by 11 votes, and that primary result was overturned as well.

Berkman, a Gary resident, is accused of voting illegally in the Riga/Anderson election. He is charged with one count each of voting in other precincts and perjury.

Bernard Carter asked the attorney general for help looking into the 2003 primaries that fall. Federal investigators took over, checking for violations of federal law, but found none. They handed the case back to state and county officials in March, the attorney general said.

The Carters were assisted in the investigation by the Indiana State Police.

And they're not done yet, the attorney general said Friday at the Indiana Welcome Center.

"The assignment continues," he said at a news conference. "Public corruption is a serious issue in Indiana wherever it occurs, but it's occurred too many times in Northwest Indiana. The public's confidence is undermined by the acts of corruption by public officials in the election process."

The probable cause affidavit reports Battle, 51, lived in Gary but voted in the East Chicago primary. He is charged with seven counts of vote fraud, ballot fraud and perjury.

Allan "Twig" Simmons, 37, of Hammond, faces 20 charges including perjury, obstruction of justice and vote fraud.

Those are in addition to nine charges filed against him in March.

According to the affidavit, Simmons encouraged several people to vote absentee, provided them with ballots -- some of which were already filled out -- and took them from the voters for delivery.

Two of those whom Simmons helped vote absentee were legally blind, the report states. Many of the voters were elderly or weren't fluent in English, Steve Carter said.

"It's hard to think those people would seek out those opportunities to participate in illegal activities," he said.

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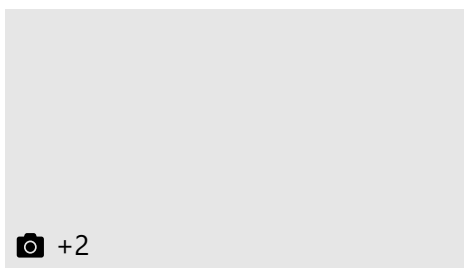
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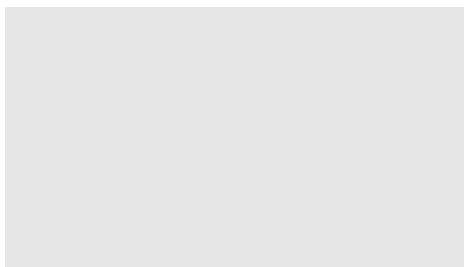
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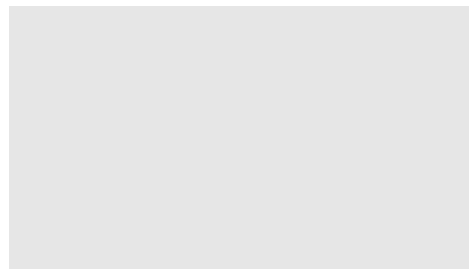
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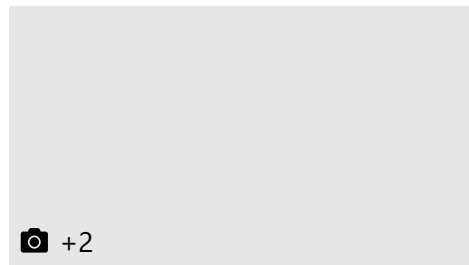
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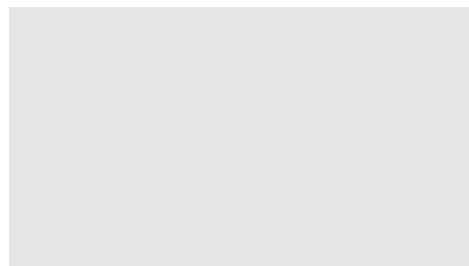
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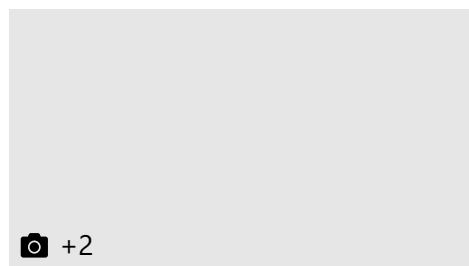
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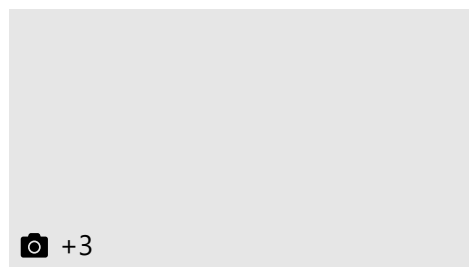
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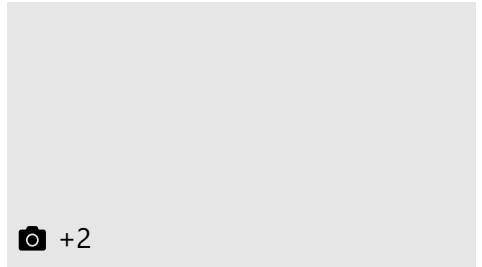
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