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Jan 29, 2008

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CROWN POINT

Vote fraud task force tabs new convictions

Four more people have pleaded guilty to voting misconduct during the 2003 East Chicago municipal Democratic primary election, the Indiana attorney general reported Monday.

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Joseph R. Pedraza, 65, an East Chicago Fire Department captain and mechanic, and his wife, Constance D. Simmons-Pedraza, 54, an East Chicago school paraprofessional, pleaded guilty this month to voting outside their home precinct, the attorney general's office reported.

The Joint Vote Fraud Task Force conducted by Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter and the Lake County prosecutor alleges the two falsely reported living in East Chicago to be eligible to vote in the city, but city employment records proved they lived in St. John.

A judge imposed a one-year prison sentence, which will be suspended if they satisfactorily complete one year on probation.

Michael Lopez, 36, and his brother Christopher Lopez, 34, both of Dyer, also pleaded guilty to unauthorized entry of East Chicago voting polls.

A judge imposed a suspended 60-day sentence on the brothers. The prosecutor dismissed felony charges against the brothers.

CROWN POINT

Gary man sentenced for 19 bags of cocaine

Lake Criminal Court Judge Clarence Murray sentenced James Edward Smith, 33, of Gary, to two years in prison Monday.

Smith pleaded guilty last month to allegations he possessed 19 bags of cocaine weighing 6.6 grams Sept. 16 when a Gary police officer approached to investigate his activities.

CROWN POINT

Portage man accused of violating driving ban

The Lake County prosecutor's office charged Lawrence Anthony Homan, 44, of Portage, with operating a vehicle after a lifetime forfeiture of his driver's license.

Lake Station police said an officer stopped Homan's vehicle Sunday night near the intersection of Central Avenue and Grand Boulevard for speeding and disobeying a stop sign. Police said he refused a breath test. He also is charged with driving while intoxicated.

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Gary man sentenced for handgun violation

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Lake Criminal Court Judge Diane Boswell sentenced Darvay Mashawn Sallee, 33, of Gary, to six years in prison Monday for carrying a handgun without a permit.

The Lake County prosecutor's office said a jury found Sallee guilty last month of carrying a handgun and three bullets March 2 when he fled from a traffic stop near the intersection of 11th Avenue and Connecticut Street in Gary.

CROWN POINT

Trial set for husband charged with slaying

A Gary man whose daughter implicated him in his wife's 1990 death received a new trial date.

Lake Criminal Court Judge Diane Boswell on Monday ordered Rodney A. Boesel, 51, of Gary, to stand trial the week of Aug. 18.

Boesel pleaded not guilty to a charge he murdered his former wife, 22-year-old Donna Boesel, who went missing just after Christmas in 1990.

A little more than two years later, hunters found her skeletonized body in southern Lake County near the Kankakee River.

The Lake County sheriff reopened the investigation after Rodney Boesel's daughter implicated her father in the slaying.

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