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## 2-year sentence in E.C. vote fraud

VOTE FRAUD: Larry Battle first convicted in election fraud to get prison time

RUTHANN ROBINSON

219.662.5331

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**C**ROWN POINT | Lake Criminal Court Judge Salvador Vasquez has sentenced a man who failed to show up in court to two years in prison.

Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter and Lake County Prosecutor Bernard Carter listened as Vasquez sentenced an absent Larry Battle, 52, for vote fraud he perpetrated in the 2003 East Chicago primary election.

Defense attorney Willie Harris couldn't explain his client's absence, except to suggest it may have something to do with Battle's heart problems.

Harris asked Vasquez to show mercy.

He said Battle wouldn't last two days in prison. The stress of this case and his heart condition is killing him, Harris said.

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Besides, everybody was voting in different precincts, paying others to vote absentee and the like, he said.

"I'm not saying it was right," Harris said. "Yes, it hurt voters. Yes, someone else may have won. But it wasn't killing or stealing. It wasn't what we in society are really concerned about. And who put this whole thing together? We haven't seen one of them in court."

Deputy Prosecutor Angela Brown pointed out that Battle had a criminal history of "crimes of dishonesty."

"This was a theft of an election. Legitimate votes were taken from voters," she said.

The Indiana Supreme Court ordered the election redone and as a result, the incumbent, long-term East Chicago Mayor Robert Pastrick lost to George Pabey.

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Brown said the voting shenanigans were not only an expense but an embarrassment.

"The community needs to be assured this won't be tolerated in East Chicago or Lake County," she said.

Battle is the seventh person to be convicted for election fraud in Lake County Criminal Court stemming from an investigation of fraudulent activity during the 2003 East Chicago primary, the attorney general said.

Several police officers are among the 38 others awaiting trial for the same crimes.

Battle, however, is the first to do prison time. Others were given suspended sentences and are on probation.

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