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Two more vote fraud convictions

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: Numbers rack up as two plead guilty to vote fraud in East Chicago's May 2003 primary

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CROWN POINT | Rather than go to trial and face possible conviction on four counts of vote fraud, Pedro Moro pleaded guilty to one count before opening arguments in his trial were to begin Tuesday in Lake County court.

Across the hall, Tamika Lay, 30, was sentenced to one year of probation for voting outside her precinct.

The convictions ninth and tenth for the Joint Vote Fraud Task Force of Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter and County Prosecutor Bernard Carter in their investigation into the discredited May 2003 East Chicago Democratic primary.

Former East Chicago Mayor Robert Patrick's re-election campaign was accused of manufacturing a razor-thin victory margin with tainted absentee ballots.

The Indiana Supreme Court later overturned Pastrick's win, and voters replaced Pastrick with his chief opponent, George Pabey, in a special fall 2004 election.

Moro, 37, of Merrillville, pleaded guilty to processing a ballot even though he wasn't a poll worker. He faces up to three years in prison when sentenced Dec. 15 by Lake Criminal Court Judge Salvador Vasquez.

Lay, of East Chicago, told Lake Criminal Court Judge Thomas P. Stefaniak Jr. her actions were an "honest mistake."

But when Stefaniak questioned why she didn't vote in her own precinct, Lay admitted she wanted to vote for her brother, Terrance Lay, in his bid for Randall "Blue" Artis' council seat. Terrance Lay, 29, is charged with 10 counts of inducing others to vote outside their home precincts and conspiracy. He is the utility security manager for the East Chicago Utilities Department.

Artis is charged with seven felony counts of inducing an East Chicago woman to vote outside of her home precinct and committing other voting violations.

Lay told the judge she didn't understand why she got in trouble for her one vote.

"People have been doing it (fraudulent voting) for years, and all of a sudden they want to do something about it," she said.

Stefaniak said even though the voting culture "in East Chicago in 2003 may have been different than other parts of the country or the county, it doesn't excuse her voting in another precinct to get her brother elected. It (vote fraud) diminishes the public's view of the political process."

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