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News

## Courtney Llewellyn gets probation in East Longmeadow voter fraud case

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Courtney Llewellyn makes a statement during her sentencing hearing in Hampden Superior Court Thursday.

*(Mark M. Murray / The Republican)*

SPRINGFIELD - Former East Longmeadow town employee [Courtney Llewellyn](#) was sentenced Thursday to a year probation in the voter fraud case involving her and her husband, former selectman [Enrico J. Villamaino III](#).

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That sentence is on the charge of interfering with an election official, which is a misdemeanor.

Hampden Superior Court Judge Mary Lou Rup said in the case of another misdemeanor and three felony counts, she would continue them without a finding for one year.

Llewellyn pleaded guilty to five charges in Hampden Superior Court and was sentenced late Thursday afternoon.

She pleaded guilty to larceny under \$250, two counts of perjury, one count of conspiracy and one count of interfering with election official.

Villamaino was sentenced last month to one year in the Hampden County Correctional Center in Ludlow for his role in the voter fraud scheme last year. He has to serve four months of that and the rest was suspended with probation.

Villamaino pleaded guilty to 11 charges related to a fraud scheme before last year's state primary. He was a Republican candidate for state representative, and the scheme was uncovered after an unusually large number of absentee ballots were requested in East Longmeadow.

Hampden District Attorney Mark G. Mastroianni wanted guilty findings to be entered on the felony charges and Llewellyn be placed on probation for a year.

Defense lawyer Michael O. Jennings asked all counts be continued without a finding for one year.

When a charge is continued without a finding, it means although the defendant pleads guilty in court, the judge does not record a guilty finding.

If the probation period is successfully completed there are never guilty findings on the person's record, although the record does say charges were continued without a finding.

Mastroianni said Villamaino and Llewellyn plotted to guarantee Villamaino extra votes in the Republican primary for the 2nd Hampden District state representative's seat by changing the party affiliation of Democrats to unenrolled, then submitting false absentee ballot requests in their name.

While Villamaino masterminded the scheme, the ballot changes were made after hours at Town Hall by Llewellyn, Mastroianni said.

Llewellyn was a \$27,000-per-year special projects manager with the East Longmeadow Public Access Channel.

Villamaino pleaded guilty to larceny under \$250, interfering with an election official, four counts of forgery of a document, four counts of perjury and a count of conspiracy to violate absentee ballot laws.

The first two are misdemeanors and the forgery, perjury and conspiracy counts are felonies.

Mastroianni said he wanted the guilty findings on the felonies for Llewellyn because of the serious nature of the offenses.

"This is not a crime that is victimless, your honor," he said. The voting right is held to be precious in society, he said.

The other issue Mastroianni asked Rup to consider is Llewellyn's "conscious adult decision" to commit these acts over several months.

He said the prosecution recognizes Villamaino was the mastermind and Llewellyn followed along so he is not asking she be punished as the person who came up with the scheme. That is why he is not asking for incarceration, he said.

Jennings said he agrees with what Mastroianni said about the serious nature of the offenses.

He said many times in this system there is at times room to measure the effect on the defendant of guilty findings on felonies.

Jennings said a felony conviction on a person's record follows them throughout their life.

Llewellyn met Villamaino in 2010 and developed a love for him, "there is just no question about it," Jennings said.

"It was his idea, (but) she's not blaming him," Jennings said, saying she recognizes what she did.

"It was to please this person she was head over heels in love with," Jennings said.

Llewellyn is working in retail and also takes care of an elderly couple with whom she's living, Jennings said.

Llewellyn, speaking to the judge and crying, said she wanted to apologize to the residents and staff of the town of East Longmeadow, as well as her family, for her betrayal.

Rup said voting rights are very sacred rights and conduct like this erodes peoples confidence they really have free voting rights and that their votes really mean something.

She said the matter is serious and there should be a guilty finding but she decided that would be on the misdemeanor conviction, rather than the felony convictions.

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