

https://www.niagara-gazette.com/news/local_news/political-activist-accepts-plea-deal-in-voter-fraud-case/article_f8f9e8d2-f0cc-51f7-921f-07843040bcaa.html

Political activist accepts plea deal in voter fraud case

GRAND ISLAND: Russ Thompson had faced five felony charges in the case.

Staff reports
Feb 16, 2017



A conservative political activist who has for years fought to eliminate thruway tolls on Grand Island pleaded guilty Thursday to a second-degree misdemeanor charge in a case involving allegations of voter fraud. |

Rus Thompson, a vocal critic of Grand Island town government and a longtime supporter of the Tea Party movement in Western New York, originally faced five felonies after the Erie County District Attorney's Office received a complaint that he voted in the 2015 primary in the town even though he was living in Niagara Falls at the time.

The original charges were filed by former acting Erie County District Attorney Michael Flaherty. Thompson and his attorney, Thomas Eoannou, negotiated a deal with Flaherty's successor, current Erie County District Attorney John Flynn Jr. that allowed him to plead guilty to a misdemeanor, allowing him to avoid a felony conviction and record.

Thompson formally entered the plea to one count of second-degree offering a false instrument for filing during an appearance Thursday morning in front of Acting State Supreme Court Justice Russell Buscaglia in Erie County. Thompson said the judge has agreed to limit sentencing to probation, with no jail time involved. Thompson is scheduled to return to court for sentencing on May 3.

Following his court appearance, Thompson acknowledged that before voting in the 2015 primary he signed an affidavit that he was still a Grand Island resident although he was living in Niagara County at the time. During that period, Thompson said he had recently been evicted from his longtime Grand Island home and he voted in the town where he had voted for years.

"I have lived on Grand Island for 20 years and I have been voting on Grand Island for 20 years. I never missed an election," he said.

Thompson did not believe the situation warranted the number of charges filed by Flaherty's office and he said he would not agree to accept a plea that would have left him with a felony conviction.

"I'm not pleading guilty to a felony. There's no way. I'm not giving up my right to vote and I'm not losing my right to bear arms."

Thompson said he was relieved to be able to put the matter behind him and appreciative of Flynn's willingness to "take the politics" out of the prosecution in the case.

Thompson maintains that the pursuit of charges against him was politically motivated by a group of political opponents on Grand Island who dislike his involvement in local politics and his willingness to speak out about issues facing the town. He indicated that he may pursue a civil lawsuit in the future.

"I feel relieved but yet still frustrated because I don't want them to get away with what they got away with so far," he said.

“I’ll fight until the day I die. That’s just the way I am,” he added.



Niagara Gazette Events

See All Events Add your event

Thu, Oct 15 Fri, Oct 16 Mon, Oct 19 Fri, Oct 23 Fri, Oct 26

< >

One Team Scavenger Hunt Niagara Falls Recommended Parking to...			Tim The Truth - Dining Experience The Rapids Theatre			103.3 The Edge Presents City and Colour The Rapids Theatre			Mobile Blood Donation Center at Niagara River... Niagara River Region...			Metal M The Rapi	
	THU 15	FRI 16	SAT 17	SUN 18	MON 19	TUE 20	WED 21	THU 22	FRI 23	SAT 24	SUN 25	MON 26	TUE 27

