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Shakopee woman pleads guilty to voting twice in 2016 election

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Voters took to the polls Tuesday afternoon in Jordan. Joel Brezezinski came out to vote because he thinks the state needs a little help. "There's good things and there's bad things, but I think everything could be run better than it is," he said. "I'd like to see a Republican in there."

Photos by Sarah Wynn

A 25-year-old Shakopee woman pleaded guilty to voting twice in the 2016 general election by voting absentee in Minnesota and in person in Fargo, North Dakota.

Hannan Yassin Aboubaker was charged with voting absentee in Shakopee and then voting in Fargo in person.

But her attorney says it was all a big mistake.

“They implied some nefarious scheme on her part,” said Monty Mertz of Fargo. “She maintained 100 percent of the time it was an honest mistake.”

According to the charging documents, Aboubaker had her friend witness her signing the absentee ballot, but then later thought the vote wouldn’t count because her friend isn’t a citizen of the U.S. Witnesses must either be registered to vote in Minnesota, or be a notary or authorized to give oaths.

Fearing her absentee ballot would be void, she voted at the Fargo Public Library, according to court documents.

She was charged with a class A misdemeanor for the election offense and entered an Alford plea, meaning she contends she’s innocent of the crime but admits the prosecution has enough evidence to convict her.

Mertz said Aboubaker was finishing her studies in respiratory therapy at North Dakota State University before moving back to Shakopee. She filled out an absentee ballot in Scott County but then “found out her friend wasn’t qualified to witness” her vote because she’s from Ghana and not a U.S. citizen. She was here on a student visa.

“My client believed that her Minnesota vote would not count,” Mertz said.

Aboubaker got a “very favorable” disposition by having her sentence deferred, Mertz said. A total \$360 in fees were waived and her sentence was deferred until March, during which she’ll be on unsupervised probation, according to Cass County District Court records. As long as she doesn’t commit any crimes during that time, two months after her probation ends, the guilty plea can be withdrawn, the case dismissed and file sealed under the law.

Mertz said he learned a lot in the case, including the fact that Minnesota and North Dakota cross-check a list of voters to guard against double voting, according to correspondence disclosed by the prosecutor.

In his 37 years of practicing law, Mertz said this is the first time he’s handled an election fraud case.

“It’s the only one I’ve ever heard of,” he said.