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Gilchrist indicted for voter fraud

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Gilchrist

ELYRIA -- Robert Gilchrist, former director of the Lorain County Community Action Agency and Lorain city official, was secretly indicted on four counts of illegal voting. The charges stem from a complaint the Lorain County Board of Elections received about Gilchrist voting in the wrong Lorain city ward in the November 2009, May 2010, November 2010 and May 2011 elections. Gilchrist, 42, was booked into the Lorain County Jail yesterday morning, but was released on a personal bond of \$10,000, Lorain County Prosecutor Dennis Will said. The investigation was given to prosecutors late last year when a resident questioned where Gilchrist was living and if he was voting in the—

right place, Will said. He said that Gilchrist had previously lived in a apartment on Broadway in Ward 2. A residency investigation letter to the board of election members, dated Aug. 17 of last year, states that after September 2009, Gilchrist was no longer a resident at 401 Broadway, but was continuing to use that address as his voting residence until August 2011, at which time he changed his address to 4628 Fields Way in Ward 8. Paul Adams, director of the Lorain County Board of Elections, said the board has not had recent involvement with the investigation. "Since about last year when we handed things over to the prosecutor's office, we've basically been out of it," Adams said. The case should counter general claims that local election workers do not pay attention to potential voting fraud, Adams said. "I think what is happening here and what the board has done proves that, at least in our county, voter fraud is taken very, very seriously," Adams said. "This is not something pushed under the rug and the board hasn't taken action on it." Election poll workers ask voters for identification in the form of a driver's license, utility bill or military identification card, Adams said. As long as a driver's license is valid, it can serve as identification even if it does not have a voter's current address, Adams said. If a voter's old address on a driver's license matches the address listed with the board of elections, and the voter does not say anything about moving, poll workers don't want additional information to question the voter, he said. "The poll worker has a responsibility to forward them to the correct voter location, but from the information the voter provided," Adams said. "From the form of identification you provide to the poll workers, that's how they determine where you need to vote." When lawmakers made rules requiring identification at the polls, some argued that voters who move between elections should not be disenfranchised if they cannot afford to pay for an updated driver's licenses with the new addresses, Adams said. Adams said he was not aware of any other pending claims of voter fraud in the county, and he added he had "no idea" if Lorain County Board of Elections members or staff could be called to testify in the case. Gilchrist will be arraigned July 5 at the Lorain County Common Pleas Court. Reporter Richard Payerchin contributed to this story.