




Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has previously used the Fort Worth case as an example of why the Voter ID law is needed. JOHN DAVENPORT AP

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FORT WORTH

A Fort Worth woman who has been used as an example of why voter ID laws are needed pleaded guilty twice last week in a voter fraud case.

On Tuesday, as Hazel Brionne Woodard lay partially unconscious in a Tarrant County courtroom, she muttered to paramedics that she confessed to a crime that

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Woodward was sentenced to two years of deferred adjudication probation on her initial plea, but Judge Ruben Gonzales did not make it official because of her medical issues.

Woodard was back in the courtroom Friday, when Gonzales gave her an opportunity to withdraw her guilty plea and have a jury trial, saying he had a “strong concern” that she did not admit to her crime.

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Woodard then readmitted her guilt and took the probation offer.

“There is no doubt that after today that you admit to this crime,” Gonzales said Friday.

Woodward’s plea was the latest twist in a case that has been used as an example of what’s wrong with the Texas voting system. When she was indicted in 2011 — under

expected soon.

Even as it meanders through the halls of justice, the law was tweaked by the Texas Legislature with new legislation — signed by Gov. Abbott in May — that allows potential voters to obtain a free copy of their birth certificate, provided they use the document to get a photo ID that will allow them to vote.

The law's opponents argue that fraud is rare and actual voter impersonation is virtually nonexistent.

Voter ID advocates say their opposition and the lower courts that have ruled against them do not understand that people need assurances that the Texas vote is valid.

The voting rights issue re-emerged on the national scene last week, when presidential candidate Hillary Clinton urged Washington lawmakers to pass a bill to restore the Voting Rights Act during a speech at historically black Texas Southern University in Houston. The Supreme Court struck down a key portion of the Voting Rights Act in 2013 and allowed some states to make significant changes in their election laws.

Myrna Perez, director of the Voting Rights and Elections Project for the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, said the new birth certificate law in Texas does not address a lack of voter education, a lack of voter access and other issues including travel.

Perez also said there is no money in the new legislation to inform voters that they can get a free copy of their birth certificate.

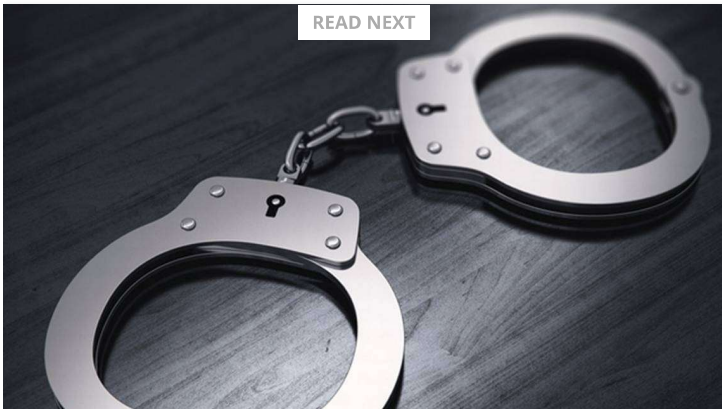
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Judge Ruben Gonzalez UNKNOWN *HANDOUT*

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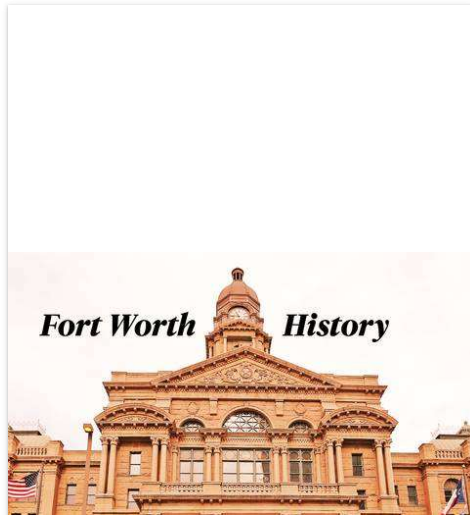
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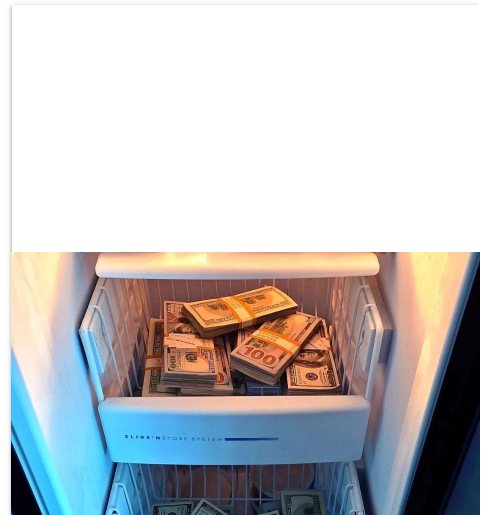
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