

Ex-commission candidate sentenced for voter fraud

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DeFUNIAK SPRINGS - Greg "Charlie" Burke won't run for the Walton County Commission. In fact, he'll pay back all salary he made from another county post.

That's the price for fudging his election documents, a judge said Thursday.

Burke, a former candidate for the commission, was sentenced to two years probation for committing voter fraud, a third-degree felony.

He also will pay back the money he earned as commissioner of the South Walton Mosquito Control District. He will pay more than \$1,800 in restitution to the state attorney's office and \$775 in court costs.

Burke, who made \$4,000 a year at his post with the mosquito control district, could have faced a five-year prison term.

"I don't take lightly the fraud upon the public when you ran as a citizen of this county when you were not," said Walton County Circuit Judge Kelvin Wells.

A jury found Burke guilty in June after prosecutors said he was living and voting in Bay County - which should have precluded him from running for office in Walton County.

It didn't stop him from pre-filing to run for the commission post.

Burke claimed to live in an apartment on U.S. Highway 98, although he married a Panama City Beach woman in January 2007. Prosecutors charged that he lived with her.

Burke served part of a four-year term with the mosquito control district before his arrest and a resulting suspension by Gov. Charlie Crist.

Afterward, he complained that others on the mosquito control board were targeting him because he disrupted the status quo by questioning the district's rising legal bills and helping to vote out the mosquito control director, who made \$116,000 in 2007.

The two remaining commissioners said they could form quorum without Burke.

Burke withdrew from the county commissioner's race on June 19, just days after the jury's guilty verdict, according to a letter filed with the county supervisor of elections office.

He did not immediately return a phone message seeking comment Thursday.

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