

Former Alabama Lawmaker Pleads Guilty to Voter Fraud: Sentenced to Jail



Former Alabama State Representative David Cole Pleads Guilty to Voter Fraud Charge

Former Alabama State Representative David Cole, a Republican from Huntsville, entered a guilty plea on Tuesday, acknowledging a voter fraud charge. The charge stemmed from his unscrupulous attempt to run for office in a district where he did not reside.

Guilty Plea for Voting in Unauthorized Location

In his plea agreement, Cole admitted to voting in an unauthorized location, and a judge subsequently handed down a sentence requiring him to serve 60 days in Madison County Jail. However, the remainder of his three-year sentence was suspended, and he will be placed on probation for the designated period by the plea agreement he reached with prosecutors.

Sentencing and Restitution

Circuit Judge D. Alan Mann presided over the case and ordered Cole to report to jail by October 17. Additionally, Cole was directed to pay \$52,885 in restitution. This ruling came after Cole resigned from the Alabama House of Representatives in August following his decision to plead guilty.

Sham Residence Lease

David Cole, who secured election to his position in 2022, signed a lease in 2021 for a meager \$5 per month, renting a minuscule 5-by-5-foot (1.5-by-1.5-meter) space within a house. This unconventional arrangement was orchestrated to qualify him for running in House District 10. The plea agreement disclosed that while Cole had some mail sent to this address, he never ventured beyond the entry foyer on the rare occasions he visited this purported residence.

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Alabama law necessitates that candidates live within a legislative district for a year before being eligible to run for office. However, Cole signed the lease for the compact space only two days after a redistricting plan realigned the house where he had lived since 2014 to another House district. When media scrutiny arose regarding his residency, Cole supplied a modified lease version, falsely stating that he was renting an entire house rather than a fraction.

Deceptive Property Tax Claim

To further maintain the illusion of residing in District 10, Cole signed a lease for an apartment in 2022. Despite this, he continued to claim a property tax break from the county by asserting that he was living in his original house. This deception ultimately contributed to his downfall.

Military and Medical Background

In the wake of the guilty plea, Cole's attorney, Bill Espy, said, "Dr. Cole admits and takes full responsibility for the mistakes he made in the political process." Espy emphasized Cole's commitment to community service and his impressive background as a physician and military veteran. Cole served for 22 years in the Army, undertaking tours of duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Egypt.

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Longstanding Accusations

The allegations against Cole's actual place of residence had been the subject of ongoing scrutiny since his campaign began. Another Republican had requested the Alabama Republican Party to investigate the claims of Cole's ineligibility due to residency issues. Additionally, Elijah Boyd, a Libertarian candidate in the district, filed an election challenge in civil court, further contending that Cole did not live in District 10 and was

ineligible.

Alabama's Troubled Lawmakers

David Cole is the third Alabama lawmaker to face criminal charges, becoming the second to resign during legal troubles. His case adds to the growing list of public officials facing legal consequences for alleged wrongdoing within the state.

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