

# Dispatch Politics

## Man gets fine, probation for voting twice in '06 election

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**BY BRUCE CADWALLADER**

**THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH**

Voter verification cards from two counties confused Claudel Gilbert enough that he voted twice on Election Day last year, his attorney said yesterday, as Gilbert became the first Franklin County resident ever convicted of illegal voting.

Gilbert, 38, a Haitian immigrant who became a U.S. citizen in 1994, said he was registered to vote at a Franklin County apartment before he bought a house in Licking County in 2006. He registered again for the new address at 8465 Reynoldswood Dr. in Reynoldsburg.

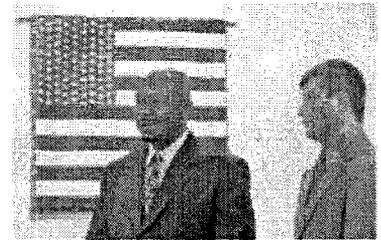
But when the boards of elections in both counties sent him cards verifying his right to vote, he thought his vote would not count unless he voted twice on Nov. 7, his attorney, Eric Yavitch, said.

An investigation was launched after Gilbert's name showed up on a statewide computer database of voters, officials said.

He pleaded guilty to voting in Franklin County, where he did not live, and to voting twice, both felonies under Ohio law. The Franklin County prosecutor's office dismissed two counts of false registration.

Common Pleas Judge Richard A. Frye sentenced Gilbert to probation for one year and fined him \$500 but suspended a six-month prison sentence. Frye said he would not prohibit Gilbert from trying to expunge the conviction. Gilbert will be able to vote in Licking County next month.

"He did not have any illegal intent," Yavitch told the judge, "but instead was trying to protect what he thought were his property rights. He is embarrassed and humiliated to be standing before an American judge in front of the American flag admitting to his mistake."



TOM DODGEDISPATCH

**Claudel Gilbert, left, was confused when he received two voter verification cards, said attorney Eric Yavitch, right. Gilbert, a native of Haiti, pleaded guilty yesterday to voting twice.**