



Lafourche Parish District Attorney's Office

IN THE NEWS

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THIBODAUX – A former Lafourche Parish Councilman charged with election violations pled guilty to two counts of criminal mischief Tuesday.

John Arnold, 42, was accused of falsifying the address of his residence on the notice of candidacy which he filed when he qualified for the election to fill the District 5 seat on the Lafourche Parish Council. Under the terms of the plea agreement, Arnold pled to two counts of criminal mischief rather than election offenses, and had his sentence deferred. He was fined \$500 plus court costs, and placed on unsupervised probation for a period of two years.

Additionally, he was ordered to pay \$20,000 in restitution to the Lafourche Parish Government. Arnold paid \$10,000 of that in court Tuesday, with the balance to be paid before the end of his probationary period.

"My office has always demanded accountability from our public officials," said District Attorney Camille A. Morvant, II. "Nobody gets a pass. And while Mr. Arnold may have served his constituents well, we cannot tolerate his actions in qualifying for office under false pretenses."

During the investigation, it was learned that Arnold used a Gray, Louisiana address in Lafourche Parish to qualify for public office in Lafourche, even though he did not live there. The residents who actually resided there told investigators that Arnold had asked them if he could start receiving mail at their address, to which they agreed. Arnold ultimately acknowledged to investigators that he used the Gray address, claiming at the time that it was a mistake.

"Even though Mr. Arnold did a good job as a councilman, representative democracy requires that a candidate live in the district, and Mr. Arnold did not reside in Lafourche Parish when he was elected," said Assistant District Attorney Rene' Gautreaux, who prosecuted the case. "Under these circumstances, however, (a plea) was a fair resolution to his case."

Arnold withdrew from the race for the District 5 seat early in course of the investigation.