



October 16, 2010

Cromartie Apologizes in Tax Evasion Case

Columbia City Councilman, E.W. Cromartie was charged and convicted of tax evasion and upon sentencing, apologized to the judge for his 'errors in judgment', to which the US Assistant Attorney Mark Moore responded to the judge, "These aren't just errors in judgment. They are crimes".

Cromartie's sentence was a prison sentence of 12 months and one day, repayment of more than \$58,000 in back taxes over 3 years broken up into payments of \$1,600 per month while on supervised release from prison starting from 60 days after his release. The sentence was part of a plea agreement between Cromartie and the federal authorities. He will be imprisoned in the Federal Work Camp in Williamsburg County beginning sometime next year.

Moore, the prosecutor in the case, asked for a fine to be imposed in the sentence but the judge declined. US District Court Chief Judge David Norton said in coming to his sentencing, he took into consideration Cromartie's past service record. Cromartie has served the people of his constituency in District 2 for 27 years in his work in the council and in the process has earned a reputation for being a dogged fighter for issues facing his constituents.

Judge Norton received and read through a 100 page binder filled with letters from lawyers, doctors, teachers, clergy and ordinary citizens who had good things to say about Cromartie out of their interaction with him over the years. Four people including the former mayor of Columbia, Bob Coble, spoke on behalf of Cromartie to the judge.

Many people packed the federal courtroom to hear the verdict and are willing to forgive Cromartie of his crimes including his earlier one of not paying property taxes in the mid-1990s.

In April, Cromartie pleaded guilty to one count of dodging taxes and two counts of rearranging his bank deposits in order to avoid reporting them according to federal law which states that bank deposits of \$10,000 or more must be reported to the government. As a result of his plea, Cromartie resigned from the Council on March 9 and also lost his license to practice law.

Back in 2003, Cromartie had begun to break the law regarding taxes. That year, he stopped paying employment taxes on his liquor store, the One Stop Party Shop in Beltine Boulevard. Then in 2005, he failed to pay his taxes amounting to \$25,316 although he did submit his returns.

Cromartie continued to avoid paying employment taxes on his liquor store and his legal firm. Altogether, the liquor store business owed the IRS \$22,567 and his legal firm, \$10,192. Over the years, Cromartie's tax debts totaled \$58,075.