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Former Senator Steven Payne Sr. Arrested on Charges of Sexual Battery in Orlando

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Steven Payne's mugshot as taken by the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

Former at-large Senator Steven Payne Sr. was arrested on Friday by the Orlando Police Department on an out-of-county warrant from Duval County.

The 57-year-old male was booked with a bond amount set at \$250,003. According to the International Criminal Justice Information System affidavit, Payne faces an original charge under section 794.011(8)(B), which pertains to sexual battery. Payne was in St. Thomas on Friday attending the funeral of Jerry Lynch, the son of Bob Lynch, where he played the trumpet. Payne took a late flight out of St. Thomas and was apprehended in Orlando.

The arrest follows a series of allegations and investigations that led to Payne's expulsion from the 34th Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands. In July of last year, [14 senators voted to expel](#) Payne after three women accused him of either sexual harassment or sexual assault. The initial accuser was a young employee from his own office. Payne's expulsion was a result of immense pressure on lawmakers to address a scandal that was solely tied to him.

Payne had been under investigation by the Senate Committee on Ethical Conduct when the Consortium reported on additional alleged incidents. In a report [published on April 11, 2022](#), Payne allegedly forcibly removed the underwear of Chezni Jones during an encounter at a St. John beach, according to Ms. Jones. A subsequent report dated May 25 detailed allegations from 22-year-old Steffi Emilien, who claimed she was a minor when Payne assaulted her on multiple occasions. Emilien's allegations included a disturbing account of Payne engaging in non-consensual sexual activities.

As of now, Steven Payne Sr. remains in custody, awaiting further legal proceedings. It is currently not clear whether Payne's arrest on the charge of sexual battery is related to his alleged sexual assault of Steffi Emilien. However, it is noteworthy that the out-of-county warrant was issued by Duval County, which includes the city of Jacksonville —[the same city where Emilien alleges that Payne forced her to perform sexual acts](#). The arrest could be related to the Emilien matter, or another case entirely. The Consortium will update this story as more details emerge.

An out-of-county warrant is a legal order for arrest that has been issued by a court or judicial authority in one county, but is executed or carried out in a different county. Essentially, it allows law enforcement officials to arrest a person who is located in a county other than the one where the warrant was originally issued.

Payne's arrest by the Orlando Police Department on an out-of-county warrant from Duval County suggests that the legal order for his arrest was issued in Duval County, Florida, but he was apprehended in Orlando, which is in Orange County, Florida.

Such a warrant typically requires coordination between law enforcement agencies from the issuing county and the county where the person is found. Once arrested on an out-of-county warrant, the individual is often extradited back to the county that issued the original warrant to face charges there — in this case Duval County, and Jacksonville is a city within Duval County.

The sexual battery charge in Florida carries varying degrees of punishment depending on the specifics of the case. If convicted for sexual battery committed by a person 18 years or older upon a person less than 12 years of age, he could face a capital felony, punishable by the death penalty or life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. In cases involving a deadly weapon or resulting in serious personal injury, the charge could be a life felony, leading to a sentence of up to life imprisonment. For most other instances of sexual battery without consent, including those committed on victims 12 years of age or older, the charge would be a first-degree felony, which could result in up to 30 years in prison. The Consortium will update this story as more details emerge.