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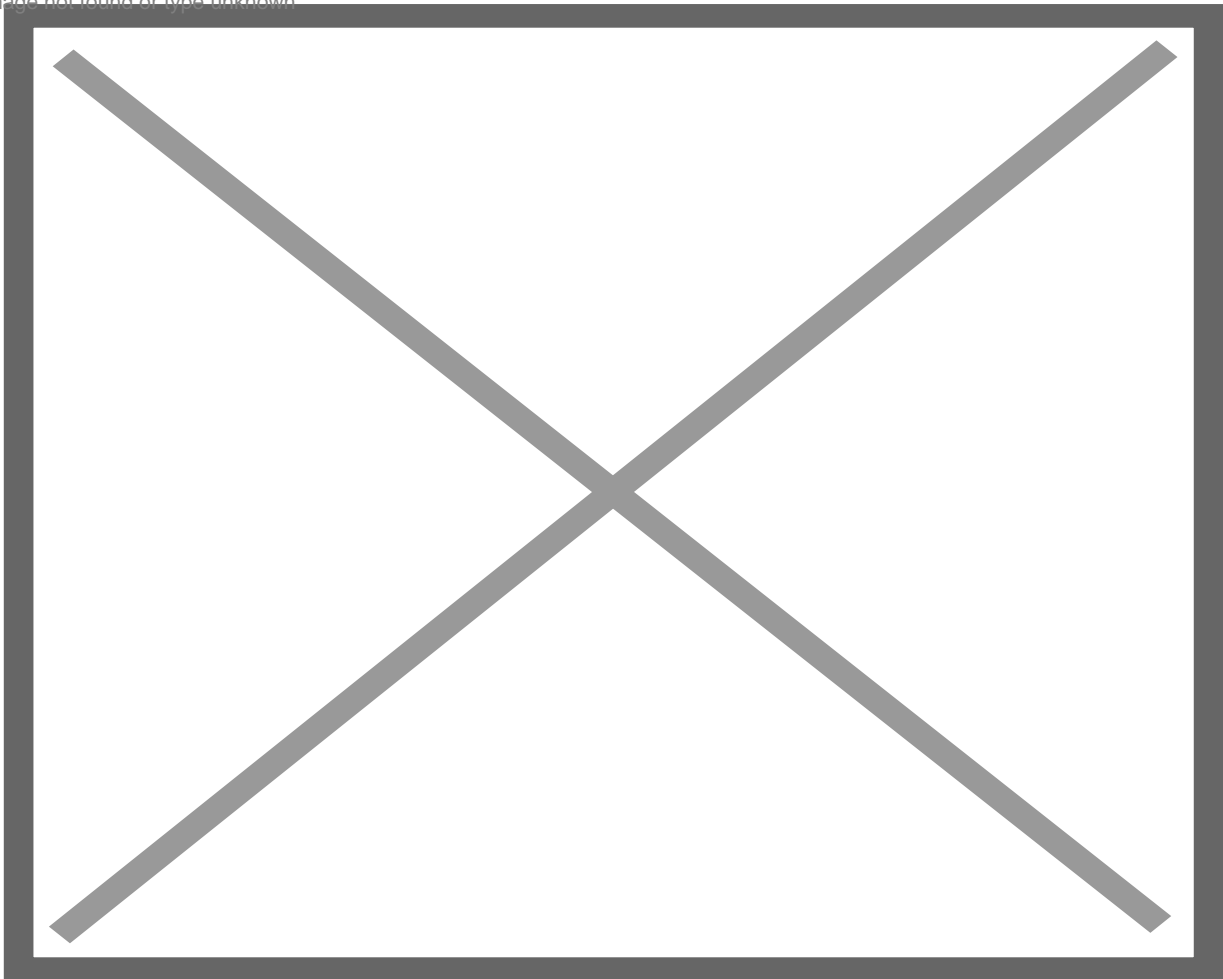
Prosecutors Seek 45-Month Prison Term for Stephanie Barnes In New Sentencing Memorandum

Federal prosecutors seek harsher sentence for false tax returns and fraud

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Stephanie Barnes reported to the V.I. District Court on St. Croix Monday, Dec. 27, 2021 to begin serving her prison sentence. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

Federal prosecutors have asked for a 45-month sentence for Stephanie Barnes, who jurors [found guilty](#) of filing false income tax returns, conversion of government property and conspiracy to commit government program fraud.

A 19-page sentencing memorandum filed on Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Justice outlined the government's rationale for recommending 3.75 years behind bars for Ms. Barnes, which they

acknowledge is higher than what would be expected from basic guideline calculations. “We request this upward variance in order to account for Barnes’s conviction for violating Virgin Islands tax law,” USDOJ lawyers explained, as well as to “maintain parity” between a Virgin Islands offender and one on the mainland.

Prosecutors told the story of how Ms. Barnes and co-defendant Anne Golden, who was [previously convicted and sentenced](#) for her role in the affair, worked together to funnel cash and emoluments from the VI Casino Control Commission’s coffers to Ms. Barnes. Their illicit scheme included two no-bid contracts, underwriting her doctoral studies, and cash reimbursements for personal expenditures. Ms. Barnes even faked a tax form to understate her 2016 income, resulting in a tax bill for that year that was more than 90% smaller than it should have been.

After the conspiracy was uncovered, Ms. Golden pleaded guilty in December 2019, and subsequently sentenced to 24 months in federal prison. She was released in September 2021 and testified against Ms. Barnes in the latter’s trial. Meanwhile, Ms. Barnes continued to profess her innocence, with her attorney calling the charges “propaganda” during his opening statements at trial. Following her conviction, Ms. Barnes continued to fight, [filing for a new trial](#) and accusing judge Robert Molloy of having close personal friendships with Ms. Golden and her family. Her attempts to subpoena Governor Albert Bryan Jr. as a witness in her defense were twice-denied by the judge.

In asking for the 45-month sentence, prosecutors explicitly noted that their recommendation does not include Ms. Barnes’s criminal liability for violations of Virgin Islands law, for which she faces a separate statutory maximum of eight years in jail.

A carceral sentence is necessary for deterrence in this case, the USDOJ argued, noting that Ms. Barnes has continued to deny her guilt even after the jury’s verdict, has expressed no remorse for her actions, “and has shown not a scintilla for self-awareness regarding her disgraceful conduct,” according to the sentencing memorandum. “To this day, Barnes not only steadfastly refuses to accept any responsibility for her criminality, but she goes a step further by persisting in the courageous fiction that somehow, she is still owed \$75,000 in payments from the VICCC,” the memorandum notes.

Prosecutors contrast Ms. Barnes’s recalcitrant behavior to that of her co-conspirator Ms. Golden, who pleaded guilty ahead of trial and accepted responsibility for her actions. They ask the court to consider these differences and not be swayed into imposing an equally short sentence for Ms. Barnes. “A sentence of 45 months for Barnes is sufficient, but not greater than necessary, to reflect the seriousness of the offense, promote respect for the law, and to provide just punishment for Barnes,” USDOJ attorneys argue.