

Judge Rejects O'Neal's Eight-Week Delay Request, Gives Her Until July 1 to Surrender

Judge Mark Kearney said O'Neal did not raise health concerns before or during sentencing and found no basis to overcome detention pending appeal, but granted a short extension so she and new counsel can interview appellate attorneys before surrender.

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Jenifer O'Neal and her daughter leaves the District Court in St. Thomas on Monday, Dec. 8, 2025. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Jenifer O'Neal has been given until July 1 to surrender to federal custody, after District Court Judge Mark Kearney rejected most of [her request](#) to delay the start of her seven-year prison sentence by eight weeks while she seeks appellate counsel.

In a June 22 order, Judge Kearney granted O’Neal only a short extension, directing her to self-surrender to the United States Marshal’s Office in St. Thomas at 2:00 p.m. on July 1, 2026. The order leaves her on continued home detention in the District until that date and reminds her that the conditions of release imposed during her June 11 sentencing hearing remain in effect.

The court also warned that the probation office must promptly seek remand if it learns of any violation of those conditions.

O’Neal, the former Office of Management and Budget director, was sentenced earlier this month to [seven years in prison](#) in the Mon Ethos corruption case. Judge Kearney said at sentencing that she had traded her integrity for cash. After the sentence was imposed, O’Neal dismissed her trial attorney, Dale Smith, and newly retained attorney Carl Williams filed a motion asking the court to reconsider the surrender order.

Mr. Williams, who described his role as limited, asked that O’Neal’s prison reporting date be delayed by eight weeks so she could retain qualified appellate counsel, complete preliminary appeal work, and address what the filing described as “several medical issues.” The prosecution opposed any further delay.

Judge Kearney was not persuaded by the broader request. In Monday’s order, he found that O’Neal “did not raise health concerns before or during sentencing nor in correcting the Presentence Investigation now raised in seeking delay.”

The judge also found “no basis to overcome the presumption of detention pending appeal from a felony conviction,” writing that the noticed appeal appeared to rely on arguments made during trial and repeated in a post-trial motion. Those arguments, he found, did not raise “a substantial question of law or fact” needed to overcome the statutory presumption of detention pending appeal.

Judge Kearney also noted that O’Neal now admits longstanding concerns with her trial counsel, but still agreed to proceed after further consideration before her June 11 sentencing hearing.

Still, the court found good cause to give O’Neal and her new counsel a short extension to interview potential appellate counsel while she remains on home detention. Judge Kearney added that she could also interview counsel from custody, describing that as customary.

The court also vacated its June 17 order that had scheduled a June 23 telephone conference on O’Neal’s representation, finding that the issue was mooted by the limited appearance and timely notice of appeal.

Judge Kearney granted Attorney Smith’s motion to withdraw, citing Mr. Williams’s entry of appearance and the absence of prejudice while awaiting scheduling from the Court of Appeals. The Clerk of Court was directed to terminate Mr. Smith’s representation.

The ruling means O’Neal received additional time, but not the eight weeks she requested. Unless the court or appellate court takes further action, she must report to the U.S. Marshal’s Office in St. Thomas at 2:00 p.m. on July 1.