

After Surrendering to Prison, Jenifer O’Neal Ordered to Choose Counsel for Appeal

Following a hard-fought but unsuccessful attempt to stay out of prison pending appeal, Jenifer O’Neal must tell the appeals court whether she will hire private counsel or request court-appointed representation as she challenges her Mon Ethos convictions.

Federal / **Published On July 06, 2026 06:04 AM /**

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The United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit has informed Jenifer O’Neal that she must decide who will represent her as she seeks to overturn her [conviction](#) on fraud, bribery, and money laundering charges, a directive that comes shortly after the former Office of Management and Budget director surrendered to begin serving her federal prison sentence.

Ms. O’Neal’s surrender ended a weeks-long effort to remain free while her appeal proceeds. After being sentenced to seven years in federal prison in the Mon Ethos corruption case, she fought to stay out of custody pending appeal, including through requests to delay her surrender date and a motion seeking release while the appellate process unfolded. That effort was ultimately unsuccessful.

Following her sentencing, Ms. O’Neal fired her trial attorney, citing what she described as [loss of trust caused by the poor handling of her defense](#). She then retained Carl Williams for the limited purpose of attempting to keep her free on bail pending appeal. Mr. Williams made clear that his role [did not extend](#) to representing her in the appeal itself.

With that limited representation now concluded, the Third Circuit has ordered Ms. O’Neal to decide whether she will retain new private counsel or seek a court-appointed attorney under the Criminal Justice Act. The order, issued June 25 by the clerk of the court, gives Ms. O’Neal 14 days to communicate her decision, making her response due by the end of this week.

The appellate representation issue is now the next procedural step in Ms. O’Neal’s case as she attempts to challenge her conviction while serving the prison term imposed in the Mon Ethos prosecution.