

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Former V.I.P.D. Employee And Senate Candidate Sentenced To 1 Year For Embezzling Public Funds

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ST. THOMAS -- V.I. Superior Court Judge Denise Francois has sentenced 2012 Senate candidate Riise Richards to a one-year prison term for embezzling public funds when she worked as the director of the Planning and Research Division in the Virgin Islands Police Department, the V.I. Department of Justice announced this morning.

In September 2004, Richards, 58, of Prindsens Gade, was arrested on 12 charges, which included obtaining money by false pretense, fraudulent claims against the government, grand larceny, and embezzlement of public funds.

On Feb. 10, 2006, following a jury trial, jurors convicted Richards of grand larceny and embezzlement by public and private officers. However, when she faced Judge Francois Wednesday afternoon, she was sentenced only on the embezzlement conviction.

At her sentencing hearing, Richards told the court that she made a mistake.

“There was no intent for me to defraud a government I worked with for the past 25 years,” she said, while asking the court for mercy.

In his allocution, Assistant Attorney General John Tolud told the court that this case eroded the public’s confidence.

“This was a violation of the public trust; a breach of the public trust,” he said. Judge Francois then handed down her ruling, committing Richards to the Bureau of Corrections for one year with all suspended. Judge Francois also placed Richards on supervised probation for one year, ordered her to pay court costs and fees and perform 100 hours of community service.

According to an affidavit filed by Nicholas Peru, special investigator with the V.I. Inspector General’s office, Richards requested and received several false cash advances from the travel account of the Planning and Research Division for travel expenses for a woman who was not employed with the VIPD.