

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ann Golden Holed Up In Office Refusing To Receive Removal Papers From D.O.J. Investigators (Update)

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Update: At around 11:45 a.m., Ms. Golden was served.

Original Story: ST. CROIX -- As of 9:00 a.m. today, Department of Justice investigators were in the lobby of the Casino Control Commission building in Golden Rock attempting to serve C.C.C. Chairperson Ann Golden removal papers. But Ms. Golden, The Consortium has learned, has been holed up in her office, refusing to see the investigators to receive the court-ordered removal summons.

That's according to persons with knowledge of the ongoing matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Ms. Golden is the subject of a [D.O.J. investigation](#) launched by former Attorney General Claude Walker, following an [Inspector General audit](#) that found out-of-control and questionable spending at the commission by Ms. Golden, whom the audit portrayed as running the operations of the commission as if she were the sole authority, making major financial transactions with no secondary signatory.

The audit lists a myriad of questionable findings. And it found that the Casino Commission was not effectively utilizing its resources to carry out its administrative functions in accordance with established laws, rules and regulations, policies and procedures and best practices.

According to the report, released publicly on September 6, 2018, during Fiscal Years 2013 through 2016, the Casino Commission expended \$680,172 in travel and travel-related expenses without having established formal travel policies and procedures; it ignored the government-wide travel policy while it did not implement a formal travel policy of its own; the commission did not provide supporting documentation for \$488,674 of these expenses; and it did not implement internal procedures to ensure that travel



Ann Golden

“In addition, we found that \$556,851 or 82% of the travel and travel-related expenses were incurred using Casino Commission credit cards,” reads the audit. “These charges consisted of: (i) \$190,508 in airline tickets, including non-employee and business/first class travel; (ii) hotel charges of \$272,249; (iii) transportation charges of \$28,120; and, (iv) meals and entertainment charges of \$65,974. Most of these charges lacked supporting documentation and are questionable in relation to the operations of the Casino Commission.”

Travel Advance/Claim For Reimbursement

According to the report, a review of the checks issued for travel advances shows that only Ms. Golden was given travel advance payments. However, even though she was advanced travel payments totaling \$19,150 from the Casino Commission’s checking account, there was no supporting documentation to show how Ms. Golden used the advanced funds.

“Although we were not provided with support for these advance payments, we were able to match the advance payment with travel expenses incurred on the chairperson’s credit card during the same travel period,” reads the O.I.G. report.

Ms. Golden has vehemently rebut the findings, telling The Consortium following the audit's release that the I.G. refused to accept supporting documents for expenditures. She also said the audit was a "hit job" instigated by former Governor Kenneth Mapp to mar her character.

Immediately after the release of the audit, Mr. Walker filed suit in the Superior Court seeking to remove Ms. Golden. In his complaint, Mr. Walker cited Virgin Islands Code Title 32, Section 406 (g), which reads: "A commissioner may be removed from office for misconduct in office, willful neglect of duty, or other conduct evidencing unfitness for this office, or for incompetence. A proceeding for removal may be instituted by the Attorney General in the Superior Court.... Each commissioner or employee of the commission shall be subject to the duty to appear and testify and to removal from his office, position or employment in accordance with the provisions of Title 3, chapter 25 of this Code."

Strengthened by the above section of local law, Mr. Walker charged in his suit that, "Based on recent audit findings, Chairperson Violet Ann Golden must be removed from her position as the chairperson and member of the commission as her actions and/or inaction has shown that she is unfit for office or incompetent."

In a statement provided to The Consortium on September 7, 2018, the attorney general said action had to be taken to remove Ms. Golden as the optics of the situation was damaging to the territory, and that individuals found wanting must be held accountable for their actions.

"Under my statutory authority, I am seeking to remove Commissioner Golden from the casino commission. The integrity of the commission must be protected as the commission has oversight responsibility of our casinos, and this is the first step," Mr. Walker said. "We do not want any harm to come to St. Croix's growing casino industry and the public has no tolerance for the type of behavior detailed in the IG's report. We must be mindful of the harmful trickle-down effect on the Virgin Islands and its casino industry. Therefore, I intend to stand up for what is right as so many small businesses, and hundreds of casino employees on St. Croix depend on the casinos to make a living."

During the time Mr. Walker was leading the investigation, Ms. Golden was away for medical attention. She has since returned to the territory, however.

The court recently issued a summons to Ms. Golden at the request of Attorney General Denise George-Counts, a clear indication that the current A.G. intends to move forward with the case. The summons is requesting Ms. Golden's appearance to show cause why she should not be removed. Ms Golden's term as a commissioner of the C.C.C. ended in April, but Governor Albert Bryan has yet to name a nominee.

Feature image: A black Dept. of Justice vehicle parked outside the Casino Control Commission this morning. (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)