

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Senator Alicia Barnes To Return Donation From Company Owned By Jeffery Epstein

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Senator Alicia Barnes said Monday she would return \$1,000 donated to her campaign in 2018 by a company that accused child molester Jeffery Epstein owns.

Queried by News2 last week, Ms. Barnes said she initially stated that to the best of her knowledge, her campaign had not received any donations from Mr. Epstein. However, after closer scrutiny of all campaign donations, she confirmed on Saturday that her campaign received a \$1,000 donation from Southern Trust Company, Inc.

"As a result of recent media reports on Friday, July 12th, I learned that Southern Trust Company, Inc., is a U.S. Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority beneficiary,

which is owned by Jeffrey Epstein," said Ms. Barnes. "When the donation was received last year, it did not raise concerns. Having recently learned that Southern Trust Company, Inc. is owned by Mr. Epstein, in light of the allegations made and the previous disposition of Mr. Epstein's legal issues, on today, Monday, July 15th, my campaign will return the \$1000 to Southern Trust Company, Inc., via certified mail."

Ms. Barnes added, "It is important that as elected officials once it is clear that donations may have been received from individuals that we would not have around our children and family, or whose positions are unequivocally unaligned with our own that donations/contributions be immediately returned."

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett was the first local politician who vowed to return funds received from Mr. Epstein, although her decision came after mounting pressure; Ms. Plaskett initially intended to keep the funds even in light of Mr. Epstein's recent arrest in New York.

Mr. Epstein, 66, owns a mansion on an island in the U.S. Virgin Islands that he also owns, called Little Saint James. Charges against the financier also allege that the USVI home was part of Mr. Epstein's sex trafficking operation.

On Friday, Senator Stedmann Hodge, Jr. said he has "never accepted any donations or contributions" from Mr. Epstein.

On Thursday, Senator Oakland Benta, who appears not to have received donations from Mr. Epstein, told right-leaning publication Breitbart News, "There is widespread corruption within the territory that needs to be addressed and looked at with fresh eyes." Mr. Benta said Mr. Epstein ran a massive influence operation to get powerful politicians, nonprofit organizations, law enforcement, and government agencies charged with stopping such corruption and criminal activity from focusing on him. "He [Mr. Epstein] has people on his payroll," Mr. Benta alleged, according to Breitbart. "He has campaign contributions. He has donated to a lot of agencies and nonprofits. Maybe part of the reason why they're not vocal is a lot of the nonprofit organizations have been recipients of contributions from Jeffrey Epstein and a lot of surrounding programs with children."

Mr. Epstein's legal team at the court hearing in New York laid out what they said would be the centerpiece of their defense: that Manhattan federal prosecutors were seeking an improper re-do of an investigation into Mr. Epstein more than a decade ago in Florida, which ended in a federal nonprosecution agreement, according to the Wall Street Journal.

"How in the world can that deal be undone?" said Reid Weingarten, a lawyer for Mr. Epstein. "To us, this indictment is essentially a do-over,"

Federal agents searched Mr. Epstein's Manhattan townhouse after his arrest Saturday and found hundreds of nude photographs of young women, some of whom appeared to be underage, officials said. Some of the photographs were discovered in a locked safe alongside compact discs with handwritten labels like "Girl pics nude."

In court, Mr. Epstein's lawyers said the images seized were likely not of underage victims, WSJ said.

After his arrest, Mr. Epstein refused to answer any of the government's questions about his income or assets, prosecutors said Monday; his lawyers said they needed time to pull that information together.

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