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Golden Continues to Paint Stephanie Barnes as Co-Conspirator in Defrauding Government

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Kia Griffith **December 15, 2021**

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Stephanie Barnes charged the V.I. Casino Control Commission \$4,500 for her appearance at a conference in New York. While in New York, the VICCC's credit was used to purchase \$5,000 per person tickets to see the Broadway musical Hamilton. By. GETTY IMAGES

Former V.I. Casino Control Commission (VICCC) chairperson Violet Anne Golden continued to give witness testimony on Tuesday at the Almeric L. Christian Federal Building on St. Croix before District Court Chief Justice Robert Molloy. Currently, Stephanie Barnes is on trial for allegedly being a co-conspirator with Ms. Golden in defrauding the Government of the Virgin Islands by spending VICCC funds for personal means.

Ms. Golden's testimony Tuesday shed light on how she misused government funding to assist the ones she cared about, namely Ms. Barnes. The prosecution, led by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jill Koster, used Golden as its witness to support the government's case that Ms. Barnes was aware that [Golden was using government-issued credit cards and checks for Barnes's personal expenses](#) and that Barnes benefitted the most from Golden's actions.

If both parties traveled for a work-related conference, it was their custom to arrive early and leave late to accommodate Ms. Barnes' requests, Ms. Golden said. One such trip was a 2016 attendance at the annual National Council on Problem Gambling conference in New York. When Ms. Golden was asked how long the conference was, she first responded by stating "a week and a couple days." Upon showing Ms. Golden the conference brochure, she then stated that the conference was three or four days long. She said it was Barnes's idea to go early and stay late since she wanted to take her son to see Broadway musical Hamilton, all at the government's expense. Ms. Barnes presented at that conference and charged the VICCC a \$4,500 appearance fee on top of her trip expenses and personal expenses covered by Ms. Golden by way of the commission's credit card. The VICCC's credit card was also used to [purchase the \\$5,000 per head Broadway tickets](#).

Golden confirmed that she viewed attending the conference that Barnes spoke at as a legitimate expense. Additionally, she admitted to not following the commission's travel regulations.

Throughout questioning led by Attn. Koster, Ms. Golden constantly stated that she acquiesced to Barnes's requests at the time. During the cross-examination, Barnes's attorney Martial Webster said to Ms. Golden, "Anytime someone makes a request, you know you have the right to say 'No.'" In response, Golden said that she paid the price for not doing so. In retrospect, Ms. Golden said that she now knows that those demands were often inappropriate.

Ms. Golden also helped her former friend and alleged co-conspirator by assisting Ms. Barnes with preparing her 2016 taxes. A draft of those tax return documents was published in evidence and showed that Barnes owed the IRB \$33,124. According to Ms. Golden, Barnes said that she could not pay that amount, so Ms. Golden sought to help her friend out by issuing a letter stating that some 1099s had to be corrected. She then adjusted some figures in Quickbooks, an accounting software, and issued Ms. Barnes a corrected 1099 that allowed her to pay back less in taxes. Golden said that Barnes knew that number was not accurate. "She benefitted," Golden said in response to the prosecution asking who benefitted from that fraudulent act. Golden admitted to knowing that what she was doing was wrong.

Attn. Webster was fishing to find inconsistencies in Ms. Golden's testimony with what appeared to be the sole goal of impeaching her as a credible witness. The trial will continue with additional testimony from Ms. Golden, and other witnesses are expected to take the stand.