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St. Croix Alois



USVI 170th YEAR

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2014, NO. 7

75¢



■ RACKETEERING: EX-SENATOR RECEIVES 54 MONTHS IN PRISON

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Williams

EB-5

EDA sees benefits in foreign capital investment program

LASIBA KNIGHT

ST. CROIX — Increasing the amount of revenue generated in the territory was the main focus of Wednesday's Economic Development Authority governing board meeting.

The proposal that garnered a large amount of the board's attention was the draft of an agreement between the EDA and American Regional Center Group LLC to create an EB-5 Regional Center.

The EB-5 program, also known as the Immigrant Investor Program, is an employment-based immigration enterprise sponsored by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. It was passed by an act of Congress in 1990 to stimulate the U.S. economy through job creation and capital investment by foreign investors.

Through the program, foreigners who invest \$1 million in a new commercial enterprise that creates or preserves at least 10 full-time jobs for U.S. citizens are granted EB-5 visas. EB-5 visas provide a means of obtaining a U.S. green card. Within the last two years, the Virgin Islands was officially allowed to participate in the

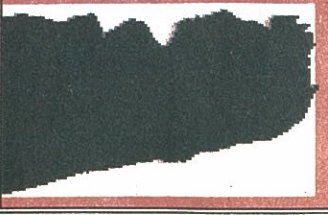
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2013 Person of the Year

THE AVIS

SUNDAY-MONDAY, JAN. 12-13 EDITION



Williams gets 4 1/2 years in prison

Sprauve receives one year, Blackett receives three years of probation

JUDI SHIMEL

ST. THOMAS — Admission, conviction and tears characterized the sentencing of former three-term Virgin Islands Sen. Alvin Williams Jr. and two associates on Wednesday.

District Court Judge Curtis Gomez gave Williams four and a half years in prison after the popular lawmaker pleaded guilty to racketeering.

Williams apologized to his family and the public for the wrong he had done while serving as an elected official. He also thanked the federal prosecutor for indicting him, saying the harsh reality brought about a change of heart.

"I stand before you in great shame. I am truly sorry for what I have done," Williams said. Gordon Rhea, his defense attorney, said he too believed Williams was truly remorseful.

"Rarely does a man with so much promise fall so far," Rhea said.

But on the day of sentencing, his lawyer added, Williams apologized publicly to two codefendants, saying they did his bidding in breaking the law.

"Alvin Williams is a changed man as a result of this experience. I believe he is no longer the man who committed this crime," Rhea said.

Gomez said he also believed Williams had become a better man but he said all of the good taking place, and all of the good he did in the Senate, could not make up for all of the bad spelled out in this case.

"It is truly troubling when the court reviews some of the activity that took place here. What does

"Rarely does a man with so much promise fall so far."

Gordon Rhea,
Williams' defense attorney

not bode well for the defendant here is the extent of the criminal activity," Gomez said.

The guilty plea in January 2013 quickly followed an indictment of Williams, his then Chief of Staff Kim Blackett and Senior Advisor Gary Sprauve on Nov. 8, 2012.

The indictment in turn, came almost a year after FBI agents, U.S. Marshals and other authorities raided Williams' Senate office on St. Thomas, confiscating documents and computer records.

Sprauve received a year in jail for his role in the racketeering conspiracy. Blackett was given three years of probation.

The defendant broke down while making his statement prior to sentencing.

"This whole thing is like a bad dream. In reality it is not a bad dream. I am very ashamed of what happened," Sprauve said.

The former senior advisor pleaded guilty to soliciting and receiving a \$10,000 bribe from the Tutu Park Mall wind turbine project and paying Williams \$17,000 in kickbacks after receiving an unauthorized raise approved by his former boss.

Blackett admitted to lying to the Legislature about the work being done while she was on their

payroll. From March 2008 until October 2012, Blackett spent her legislative work hours studying online college course work and taking tests in the name of Alvin Williams Jr. through the University of Phoenix.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kim Lindquist said the salary amassed by Blackett during that time amounted to \$173,000.

But at the urging of Lindquist and Federal Public Defender Gabriel Villegas, Gomez agreed to invoke a provision in the law that would allow the court to expunge Blackett's record after she pay restitution, serve probation and meet other requirements.

The judge said he was willing to do so because Blackett was young, had no prior touches with the law and until the time of her offense, had had an exemplary life.

However Gomez stopped short of declaring her innocent.

"I can appreciate what Mr. Williams said, but Ms. Blackett was there and knew what she was doing," the judge said.

But the brunt of culpability remained with Alvin Williams. As the sentencing played out Gomez ran through the details:

- Soliciting a bribe and abusing a posture of public trust

- Bringing Public Works Commissioner Darryl Smalls on behalf of ACE Development
- Receiving kickbacks
- Directing others to commit criminal acts

For his offenses, Williams got 54 months in prison and three years supervised release, to begin as the prison term ends. He also was ordered to perform 300 hours of community service and restitution in an amount to be determined after lawyers for both sides submit legal briefs.

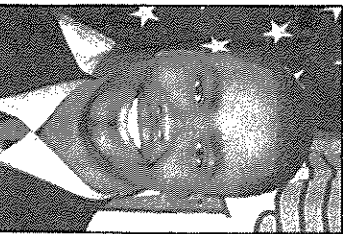
Because of his current financial status, however, Gomez did not order Williams to pay a fine.

The judge also pointed out that the federal sentencing guidelines call for 67 to 84 months incarceration on a racketeering guilty plea and Williams received fewer than that.

The legal briefs were ordered for all three defendants. The judge said he wants to decide who would pay, in what amount, and to whom the restitution will be paid.

It would be inappropriate, he said, to pay \$10,000 to the principals of the wind turbine project because they broke the law by paying a bribe.

Lindquist proposed Williams' restitution include the \$173,000 in



Williams

fully ordered to pay 10 percent the salary received while she was in Williams' office attending to the percentage.

David Cantie, the attorney representing Sprauve, asked Gomez his client could self-surrender to the Bureau of Corrections a later date, because of his age and a heart condition.

He also asked for a reduction in sentence from one year to months.

Gomez declined, saying Sprauve was a full participant in the crime and pleaded guilty to.

"The participation and discussions that led to solicitation of a bribe is particularly troubling in the court," the judge said.

As in the case of Williams and Blackett, Sprauve was also given three years supervised probation upon release from jail and 300 hours of community service.

"Thank you, Your Honor a God Bless You," Sprauve said he returned to his seat at the defendant's table.

Both Williams and Sprauve were placed in the marshal's custody at the end of the hearing.

Man shot in Estate Welcome, information sketchy

STEVE BULLOCK

ST. CROIX — Information remained sketchy Wednesday on an early-morning shooting that left one person with gunshot wounds, officials said. Shortly before 3:30 a.m.,

police responded to a shooting in Estate Welcome, and upon arrival officers were told that the victim was taken by private vehicle to Gov. Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center.

According to St. Croix Police Chief James Parris, the victim

sustained a single gunshot wound to the leg and received treatment at the hospital.

The motive for the shooting was not known and no arrests have been made, thus far. Parris said the incident is being investigated as a third-degree

assault.

As news spread of the shooting, several friends and acquaintances of the victim went to the hospital, prompting additional police units to respond as a precautionary measure, Parris said. There were no further incidents,

he said.

Police are urging anyone who knows anything about this shooting to contact detectives at 340-712-6037, 340-712-6077 or 911. Resident also can call Crime Stoppers USVI at 1-800-222-TIPS.

Police blotter

ST. CROIX	2:40 p.m. Wed., John F. Kennedy housing community	3:06 p.m. Wed., Charlotte Amalie	Assault.
Assaults:	1:25 p.m. Wed., John F. Kennedy housing community	1:46 p.m. Wed., Contant Knolls	As news spread of the shooting, several friends and acquaintances of the victim went to the hospital, prompting additional police units to respond as a precautionary measure, Parris said. There were no further incidents,
5:20 p.m. Wed., Plessen	1:15 p.m. Wed., Cotton Valley	11:50 p.m. Tue., Charlotte Amalie	assault.
8:41 a.m. Wed., Richmond	11:23 a.m. Wed., Glynn	8:41 p.m. Tue., St. John	As news spread of the shooting, several friends and acquaintances of the victim went to the hospital, prompting additional police units to respond as a precautionary measure, Parris said. There were no further incidents,
3:28 a.m. Wed., Welcome	Larcenies:	5:38 p.m. Tue., Charlotte Amalie	assault.
Rape:	3:55 p.m. Wed., Clifton Hill	Robbery:	8:08 p.m. Tue., Charlotte
8:41 a.m. Wed., Richmond	11:40 a.m. Wed., Richmond	4:45 p.m. Wed., Hospital Ground	assault.
Robbery:	10:59 a.m. Wed., Queen's Guard		
10:58 a.m. Protestant Cay			
Burglaries:			