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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Middle District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Former 3rd Circuit State Attorney And Former Dixie County Attorney Sentenced To More Than Three Years In Prison For Extortion And Other Crimes

Jacksonville, Florida – U.S. District Judge Marcia Morales Howard has sentenced former State Attorney Jeffrey Alan Siegmeister (54, Live Oak) to 40 months in federal prison for conspiracy to use a facility of commerce for unlawful activity, conspiracy to commit extortion, wire fraud, and tax fraud. His co-defendant and former Dixie County Attorney Marion Michael O'Steen (43, Old Town) has been sentenced to 44 months in federal prison for extorting a client and for failing to file a form with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. As part of Siegmeister's sentence, the court also entered an order of forfeiture in the amount of \$518,803.30, which are proceeds of the wire fraud offense. As part of O'Steen's sentence, the court entered an order of forfeiture in the amount of \$60,000, which are proceeds of the extortion offense, and ordered O'Steen to pay a \$45,000 fine.

A federal jury had found O'Steen guilty on June 15, 2022. Siegmeister had pleaded guilty on February 22, 2022.

According to evidence presented at trial and court documents, O'Steen was a criminal defense attorney who represented clients being prosecuted by former State Attorney Jeffrey Alan Siegmeister's office in the Third Judicial Circuit. O'Steen requested official acts from Siegmeister—including the favorable disposition of charges filed against his client, and the delay of official actions—in order to enable O'Steen to obtain additional "fees" from at least one of his clients. On August 17, 2018, O'Steen extorted one of his clients, telling him that if the client paid him an additional \$60,000, O'Steen would use up a "favor" with the state attorney to make "everything go away," representing that O'Steen had favors with Siegmeister for which people would pay him. O'Steen told his client he could "go to trial and fight em' out, which I don't think you can win." O'Steen further advised his client that he would not get the same results from another attorney.

O'Steen received two payments of \$30,000 each from his client. Evidence at trial established that O'Steen knew the reporting requirements but failed to timely file a Form 8300 with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network.

Siegmeister acknowledged having conspired with O'Steen to use a facility of commerce for unlawful activity, between approximately November 2017 and May 16, 2019, during which time O'Steen requested official acts from Siegmeister—including the favorable disposition of charges filed against his clients, and the delay of official actions in order to enable O'Steen to obtain additional “fees” from at least one of his clients—for which Siegmeister solicited bribes from O'Steen. The plea agreement provides that, on April 16, 2018, Siegmeister sent O'Steen four photographs of bulls he was selling, after the sentencing of one of O'Steen's clients, indicating that Siegmeister expected O'Steen to purchase a bull from him in exchange for the favorable treatment Siegmeister had provided O'Steen's client. With respect to the extortion count, O'Steen solicited Siegmeister to resolve a case against his client through pre-trial intervention (“PTI”). Siegmeister acknowledged that he made it clear to O'Steen that if O'Steen wanted his client to get a PTI agreement, O'Steen would have to buy one of Siegmeister's bulls. On August 17, 2018, O'Steen told his client, “I can make everything go away all, your brothers, the other two *nolle pros* with you sign an agreement to pay their cost of investigation, you leave, you will not have to report but one time, uh, ah, I need \$75,000 and everything goes away and you pay the money,” representing that O'Steen had favors with Siegmeister for which people would pay him.

Siegmeister also admitted to committing wire fraud by defrauding the probate court and the estate of a man identified by the initials “L.T.” While serving as the voluntary guardian of L.T., Siegmeister admitted to inflating the expenditures incurred by L.T. in a filing to the probate court and to diverting more than \$500,000 in assets from L.T.'s estate to pay Siegmeister's own personal expenditures in 2015 and 2016. Siegmeister also admitted that he had failed to report the diverted funds on his tax returns.

Attorney Ernest Maloney Page IV was previously sentenced to six months' imprisonment on September 6, 2022, for conspiracy to bribe Siegmeister in connection with the resolution of his client's pending criminal cases.

“As former officers of the court, who were sworn to serve the interests of the public, the defendants were rightly held to a higher standard,” said Brian Payne, IRS-CI special agent in charge. “These sentencing affirm that they egregiously betrayed the public trust placed in them in pursuit of their own selfish greed. The prison terms handed down today now hold them accountable for their criminal actions.”

“As a member of law enforcement, Jeffrey Siegmeister was given incredible power to enforce the law and ensure justice,” said FBI Jacksonville Special Agent in Charge Sherri E. Onks. “Likewise, as an officer of the court, Michael O'Steen had a duty to uphold the highest standards. However, instead of protecting the rights of citizens, both chose to abuse their positions of authority in an effort to line their own pocketbooks, and this type of activity will not be tolerated by the FBI. We will continue our work to root out any and all forms of corruption within the judicial system to ensure those who violate the public's sacred trust are held accountable.”

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Kelly S. Karase and David B. Mesrobian. The forfeiture was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Mai Tran.

Topic(s):

Tax

Financial Fraud

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