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Federal case moves forward against Dixie County attorney

By Jeff M. Hardison © June 11, 2021 at 1:11 p.m.

JACKSONVILLE – While the wheels of the bus are alleged to “go round and round,” as cited in the lyrics of a song believed to have been written by Verna Hills of Boston, Massachusetts, the wheels of justice can be perceived as moving relatively slowly on occasion.

The song *The Wheels of the Bus Go Round and Round* first appeared in volume 25 of the magazine titled *American Childhood* (1939).

Discovery, suppression and dispositive motions for this case are due no later than June 28. Case set for August trial term.

As for the case of the United States versus attorney Marion Michael O’Steen of Old Town, according to public records, United States District Judge Marcia Morales Howard of the United States District Court, Middle District Of Florida (Jacksonville Division), granted O’Steen’s motion to continue the deadline, status conference and trial, which was filed on March 19.

In that motion, the defendant requested that the Court continue the motion’s deadline, status conference, and trial in this matter.

In support of the motion, defense counsel asserts additional time is needed to review the voluminous discovery.

The honorable United States District Court Judge Howard ordered that the defendant's Motion to Continue Motion Deadline, Status Conference and Trial is granted. The case is continued to the August 2021 trial term, commencing on Aug 2.

In granting the defendant’s request, the Court finds that “the ends of justice served by the granting of such continuance outweigh the best interests of the public and the defendant in a speedy trial.”

As a result, this case was stricken from the May 2021 trial calendar.

In regard to this case fitting on the docket for that court, another status conference is scheduled for July 19 at 3 p.m. before United States District Court Judge Howard in Courtroom 10-B, on the Tenth Floor of the United States Courthouse, at 300 N. Hogan St., in Jacksonville.

Discovery, suppression and dispositive motions for this case are due no later than June 28, according to records.

For people unfamiliar with why the federal government is prosecuting an attorney from Dixie County, a story published a few months ago in *HardisonInk.com* is published again below:

Former State Attorney Jeffrey Siegmeister indicted for several federal crimes; M. Michael O’Steen also indicted

Story Provided By The United States Department of Justice

United States Attorney’s Office, Middle District of Florida

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JACKSONVILLE – United States Attorney Maria Chapa Lopez announced on Feb. 26 the unsealing of an indictment charging Jeffrey Siegmeister, 52, of Live Oak and Marion Michael O’Steen, 41, of Old Town with conspiracy to use a facility of commerce for unlawful activity, conspiracy to commit extortion, and aiding and abetting extortion.

Siegmeister is a former state attorney for the Third Judicial Circuit of Florida.

O’Steen is not only a private attorney, but he is also the attorney for the Dixie County Board of County Commissioners as well as the Dixie County School Board.

In the 12-count indictment, Siegmeister is additionally charged with conspiracy to commit federal program bribery, federal program bribery, wire fraud and filing false tax returns.

O’Steen is additionally charged with failure to file a form in connection with the receipt of currency.

Siegmeister was arrested in Arizona on Feb. 26 and made his initial appearance in federal court (Flagstaff, Arizona) on Monday, March 1. O’Steen appeared in federal court (Jacksonville) on Feb. 26 and pleaded not guilty. He was released on a \$100,000 bond.

According to the indictment, Siegmeister was the elected State Attorney for the Third Judicial Circuit of Florida from 2013 through 2019. O’Steen was a defense attorney who represented clients being prosecuted by Siegmeister’s office.

As part of the conspiracy to use a facility of commerce for unlawful activity, between approximately November 2017 and May 16, 2019, O’Steen requested official acts from Siegmeister --including the favorable disposition of charges filed against his clients, and the delay of official actions to enable O’Steen to obtain additional “fees” from at least one of his clients -- for which Siegmeister solicited bribes from O’Steen.

Regarding the extortion charges, O’Steen solicited Siegmeister to resolve a case against one of his clients through pre-trial intervention (“PTI”). O’Steen demanded \$60,000 from that client to procure the PTI agreement from the Third Judicial Circuit State Attorney’s Office.

O’Steen and Siegmeister then coordinated to withhold the finalization of the PTI agreement until the client paid \$60,000 in cash to O’Steen. In connection with this case, Siegmeister solicited O’Steen to purchase a bull from a herd of livestock he owned for \$4,000, and to make a political contribution.

Additionally, O’Steen is charged with failing to file within 15 days the required Form 8300 with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network to acknowledge his receipt of more than \$10,000 in cash from the client.

Siegmeister is separately charged with conspiracy to commit federal program bribery and federal program bribery in connection with another prosecution by the State Attorney’s Office for the Third Judicial Circuit. According to the indictment, Ernest Maloney Page IV, was a defense attorney representing a client charged with two driving under the influence (“DUI”) offenses.

The Third Judicial Circuit includes Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor counties. There are 20 judicial circuits in Florida.

Regarding Page’s client’s family, they owned a tractor dealership. In or around September of 2017, State Attorney Siegmeister informed attorney Page that he would favorably resolve one of the client’s DUI charges in exchange for a \$10,000 discount on a tractor Siegmeister wanted to buy from the client’s dealership, and favorably resolve both DUI charges in exchange for a \$20,000 discount.

Ultimately, Siegmeister and his wife purchased a tractor and accessories from the client’s dealership, the price of which Page’s client discounted by approximately \$20,000. In exchange, Siegmeister dismissed the DUI charges and Page’s client pleaded guilty to charges of reckless driving with alcohol and refusal to submit to a blood alcohol test.

On Aug. 20, 2020, Page pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit federal program bribery for his role in facilitating this transaction.

Siegmeister also is charged with wire fraud in connection with his legal guardianship of an elderly

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individual who lived in Columbia County. According to the indictment, from approximately January 2010 through April 2016, Siegmeister engaged in a scheme to defraud his ward and his ward's estate by, among other things, transferring the victim's assets for his own benefit, filing materially false documents with the court to conceal those transfers, and by creating a last will and testament for the victim, which designated Siegmeister's relative as the sole beneficiary of the victim's estate.

Siegmeister is also charged with filing false tax returns for tax years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed one or more violations of federal criminal law, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation. It is scheduled to be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Kelly S. Karase and David B. Mesrobian.