Judge: Wiretapped Legislators' Names Can Be Revealed

Posted on May 07, Posted by David Howard King Category State

A judge has ruled that the names of eight people who spoke on wiretaps with former state Sen. Shirley Huntley can be made public tomorrow.

Huntley, who pleaded guilty to funnelling tens of thousands of dollars in public money to a bogus charity that she operated, wore a wire for federal prosecutors for several months last year.

What makes Huntley's case so interesting is that prosecutors are arguing that the names should not be released because doing so could compromise ongoing investigations. Six of the eight people Huntley spoke to while wearing a wire are elected officials.

Judge Jack Weinstein wrote in his ruling that he isn't worried that revealing these names will ruin any cases.

"Every legislator who has conversed with this defendant will necessarily assume that he or she wasrecorded under the supervision of the FBI," he wrote. "There will be no surprises to the potentially accused by the revelations of their names. Interference with ongoing investigations will be of almost no significance."

Weinstein also wrote off concerns that revealing the names could taint elected officials before they are convicted of any crime.

"The argument that some may avoid lending their talents to public life in order to avoid its slurs has slight weight," he continued. "Since this country’s beginning, when Jefferson, Hamilton, Burr, and others began developing the art of American politics, anyone who entered the arena of government has understood that his or her good name may be unfairly sullied. Yet, the honor

and excitement of serving the public has not inhibited our best people from entering the fray of politics."

Earlier this week, Sen. John Sampson was indicted on embezzelment charges and faces 120 years in prison. Sen. Malcolm Smith was arrested in a corruption scheme to bribe his way onto the Republican ticket for NYC mayor in early April. Assemblyman Eric Stevenson was arrested for taking bribes for legislation only a few days later. Assemblyman Vito Lopez is being investigated for numerous accusations of sexual harassment. And Assemblyman William Boyland faces fresh charges in what seems to be a neverending line of indictments for the troubled legislator.

Come tomorrow we could get a better idea of who is going to soon join the list of legally troubled leigslators.

Tags: Tagged in: Eric Stevenson Jack Weinstein John Sampson Malcolm Smith

Shirley Huntley

Vito Lopez

William Boyland