

Written by Kathy  
Saturday, 04 August 2012 13:52

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By Kathy Wray Coleman, Associate Publisher, Editor, Cleveland Urban News.Com and the Kathy Wray Coleman Online News Blog.Com

AKRON, Ohio-An attorney for former Cuyahoga County Commissioner Jimmy Dimora (pictured) and at least one community activist out of the Cleveland, Oh. area say that the 28-year federal prison sentence handed to the former chairperson of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party on Tuesday for convictions by an Akron federal jury in March of racketeering and 32 other corruption-related charges is absurd at best.

"Notwithstanding the crimes that Jimmy Dimora was convicted of, I think the punishment was too severe," said Larry Bresler, a Cleveland community activist and inactive attorney who teaches classes on community organizing at Case Western Reserve University and leads the Northeast Ohio Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and Organize Ohio. "People that commit murder rarely are sentenced to 28 years."

Dimora, 57, faced more than 30 years in prison for his non-violent white collar crimes.

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He appeared for sentencing handcuffed and in an orange jail jumpsuit.

He did not take the stand at his eight week trial before U.S. District Court Judge Sara Lioi (pictured), who came under fire last year from community activists for handing former Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Judge Steven Terry, who is Black, a maximum six year sentence and giving Bridget McCafferty, a White former common pleas judge who faced 50 years in prison, only 14 months.

Terry was convicted of mail fraud and fixing a single foreclosure case, and McCafferty was convicted by a separate Akron jury of 10 counts of lying to the FBI on whether she was asked to fix cases for Democratic party affiliates, among other lies.

Their convictions are on appeal.

Dimora's lead attorney, William Whitaker, told reporters after the sentencing that Lioi is allegedly prejudiced against his client, if not hostile, and called her sentence a "death sentence."

But Lioi said the punishment fits the crime, even though federal prosecutors recommended only a 22 year prison sentence.

The judge said at sentencing that the world of Cuyhoga County corruption was enhanced by Dimora, who is White, and former Cuyahoga County Auditor Frank Russo, both of whom were described by the judge on record as having a symbiotic relationship, a term often used in the science arena to give to animals that benefit from each other's behaviors, good or bad.

Whitaker said that Dimora will appeal, and Dimora has already begun asking for money from his still loyal Democratic friends to hire a lawyer for it.

The saga unraveled three years ago when over 250 FBI and IRS agents raided Dimora and

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Russo's public offices and homes, among others.

Among a plethora of other criminal charges, the former county commissioner was convicted of using his office as commissioner to steer county contracts to friends and political associates, having an unlawful interest in a public contract, including employee labor at his lavish swimming pool at his home in Independence, Oh., and racketeering at its finest.

Russo, a staunch Democrat and Dimora ally turned snitch who faces some 22 years in prison for his corruption convictions, testified against Dimora at trial, and he remains out on bond, courtesy of federal prosecutors and Lioi.

To date more than 50 Cuyahoga County Democratic Party affiliates have been convicted of crimes, mainly businessmen and, among others, former CMHA Director George Phillips Oliver, who is Black, and who got a two-year sentence earlier this year for corruption-related convictions.

Dimora said publicly that the Republicans and a biased Cleveland Plain Dealer Newspaper, Ohio's largest, are allegedly behind his corruption convictions, and what he dubbed a prejudicial targeting of select members of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party.

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