



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

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**FORMER PORT AUTHORITY OFFICIAL SENTENCED FOR HIS ROLE IN SCHEME TO
PUNISH FORT LEE MAYOR FOR NOT ENDORSING GOVERNOR'S RE-ELECTION**

NEWARK, N.J. – A former official of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey was sentenced today to three years' probation for using the authority's resources to facilitate and conceal the cause of traffic problems in Fort Lee, New Jersey, to punish that borough's mayor for not endorsing Gov. Chris Christie's re-election.

David Wildstein, 55, the former director of Interstate Capital Projects at the Port Authority, pleaded guilty on May 1, 2015, before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton to an information charging him with two counts of conspiracy for his role in the scheme. Judge Wigenton imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

Wildstein, William E. Baroni Jr., 45, former deputy executive director of the Port Authority, and Bridget Anne Kelly, 44, former deputy chief of staff to Gov. Christie, engaged in a scheme to manufacture traffic problems in Fort Lee by reducing from three to one the number of local access lanes to the upper level of the George Washington Bridge. Baroni and Kelly were both convicted at trial for their respective roles in the scheme. On March 29, 2017, Judge Wigenton sentenced Baroni to 24 months in prison and Kelly to 19 months in prison.

"As we said in our motion to the Court, although David Wildstein was the architect of this criminal scheme and a force behind its cover-up, he accepted responsibility for his actions and admitted his guilt," Acting U.S. Attorney William E. Fitzpatrick said. "His timely, complete and truthful cooperation was extraordinary and essential to the successful prosecution of Mr. Baroni and Ms. Kelly. The law requires the government and the court to take the nature and extent of Mr. Wildstein's cooperation into account in fashioning an appropriate sentence."

"This investigation has conclusively established that the conspirators, William Baroni, Bridget Anne Kelly, and David Wildstein misused their government positions to harm the very members of the public they were hired to serve," Inspector General Michael Nestor of the Port Authority, Office of Inspector General, said. "By doing so, they put the interests of a few before the greater good of the public. They engaged in a cover-up of their scheme, and caused false information to be distributed to Port Authority employees, other government officials, and the public. The Port Authority Office of Inspector General and its professional staff continue to fulfill its mission of rooting out corruption, at no matter what level it may exist within the Port Authority. We commend and thank our law enforcement partners for their cooperative effort and

tireless work.”

“Combating public corruption is one of the FBI’s top criminal investigative priorities. It strikes not only at the heart of good government, but it also jeopardizes the security of our communities and our nation,” FBI Special Agent in Charge Timothy Gallagher, Newark Division, said. “Public corruption erodes public confidence and diminishes the strength of our democracy. Today’s sentencing highlights our commitment to aggressively pursue those who engage in unethical and corrupt practices.”

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

In August 2013, after Kelly confirmed that Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich would not be endorsing Gov. Christie for re-election in November 2013, Baroni, Kelly, and Wildstein decided to punish the mayor by deliberately causing significant traffic problems in Fort Lee under the false pretense of a traffic study.

From the morning of Sept. 9, 2013, to Sept. 13, 2013, the conspirators caused the local access lanes to be reduced so that only one toll booth, instead of the usual three, was accessible to the approach to the bridge for local traffic traveling through Fort Lee. To maximize the congestion and the punitive impact on Mayor Sokolich, the conspirators caused these lane and toll booth reductions to start on the first day of the school year without any advance notice to Mayor Sokolich, the Fort Lee chief of police or borough residents. The lane and toll booth reductions resulted in significant traffic in Fort Lee, for motorists intending to access the George Washington Bridge from local lanes, and for residents, whose streets were choked with traffic.

The conspirators agreed to disregard any inquiries from Mayor Sokolich and other Fort Lee officials about the lane and toll booth reductions. They purposely ignored communications from Mayor Sokolich, including his pleas for help, requests for information, and repeated warnings about the increased risks to public safety.

The conspirators concocted and promoted a sham story that the lane reductions were for a traffic study. They created and advanced this cover story so they could use Port Authority property, including the time and services of unwitting Port Authority personnel and other resources, to implement the lane and toll booth reductions and conceal their true punitive purpose.

In addition to probation, Judge Wigenton sentenced Wildstein to 500 hours of community service, ordered restitution of \$14,314 and fined him \$10,000.

Acting U.S. Attorney Fitzpatrick credited criminal investigators of the Port Authority, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Inspector General Nestor; special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gallagher; and criminal investigators of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, for the investigation leading to today’s sentencing.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lee M. Cortes Jr., Vikas Khanna, David W. Feder and Senior Litigation Counsel J Fortier Imbert of the U.S. Attorney’s Office Special Prosecutions Division.

Defense counsel:

David Wildstein: Alan L. Zegas Esq., Chatham, New Jersey

William E. Baroni: Michael Baldassare Esq., Newark

Bridget Anne Kelly: Michael Critchley Sr. Esq., Roseland, New Jersey