

DETROIT

NATIVE SUN

Issues that affect us all

Secretary Benson receives Presidential Citizens Medal

By Dr. John Telford
SUN COLUMNIST



On my regular half-hour WCHB-Detroit radio show on Saturday morning, Nov. 19 at 9:30 on AM1340 (the audio-tape re-ran on Detroit internet Protocol Television [DETioTV.com] every day the following week with photos), I discussed

issues whereof I spoke at a recent Police Commission meeting (too many drivers are running red lights), at a District 4 Citizens Advisory Council meeting (a track is to be hopefully installed in the prospective fieldhouse at Chandler Park), and at an Urban Information Network-sponsored meeting at Bert's Warehouse (the proposed filling-in of downtown I-375 for commercial construction runs counter to the interests of ordinary, grass-roots Detroiters).

On that same WCHB show, I made a transit announcement at the request of Mayor Duggan on behalf of the disabled,

Former Wayne County employee pleads guilty to stealing over \$1.7 million in county funds

DETROIT - A former Wayne County Roads Division employee pleaded guilty this month to conspiring to steal over \$1.7 million in county funds, United States Attorney Dawn N. Ison and Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy announced.

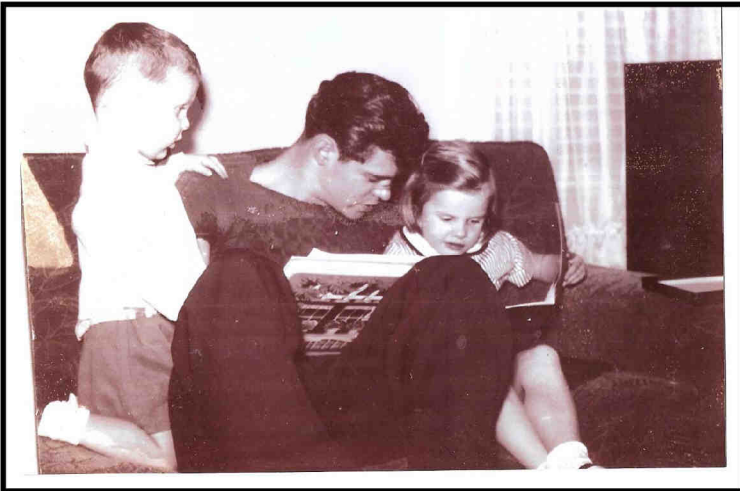
Kevin Gunn, 64, of West Bloomfield, pleaded guilty to defrauding Wayne County out of nearly \$2 million in taxpayer funds. Gunn, and fellow Wayne County employee John L. Gibson, 54, of Detroit engaged in a scheme to use taxpayer dollars to make unauthorized purchases of generators and other power equipment from retailers in southeast Michigan which they sold for personal profit. A federal grand jury indicted Gibson for these crimes in October 2022.

In March of 2021, the Wayne County Sheriff's Department began an investigation into the misuse of taxpayer dollars. The Sheriff's Department then solicited the assistance of the FBI to investigate the criminal actions of Gunn, Gibson, other employees of the Wayne County Roads Division, and vendors to Wayne County. At the beginning of the investigation, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office secured a search warrant which broke open the case and led to the uncovering of the embezzlement scheme. Investigators with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office have played an ongoing and important role in the investigation.

As part of the scheme to defraud, between January 2019, and August 2021, Gunn and Gibson solicited approved Wayne County vendors to purchase generators and other power equipment from local retailers on behalf of Wayne County. The vendors would then submit invoices for these items to Wayne County.

In order to conceal the scheme to defraud, Gunn instructed the vendors to falsify the invoices they submitted to the Roads Division, and list items the vendors were authorized to sell to the county under their contracts, rather than the generators and power equipment they were

and I commented again on my lost board Of education race and my crisis-crucial platform of literacy. Regarding that critical issue of our school district's level of illiteracy remaining the nation's lowest--which all of Detroit must mobilize to address immediately--I supported the reading of stories to children in the home (see photo of me at age sixteen reading to my little cousins Peter and Doreen), and I again called for DPSCD to install the evidence-based reading-instruction program I tried to incorporate in 2012 when I served pro bono as the DPS Superintendent during the unwarranted 1999 Republican takeover and its emergency



financial mismanagement.

He then called at length for permanent protection for DACA recipients.

Also watch longtime Detroit educator and former NCAA All-American sprinter John Telford on WJZZ Internet television Wednesday mornings at 10:00.

unlawfully acquiring at Gunn's and Gibson's request. Roads Division employees would then approve and pay each vendor's invoice with taxpayer funds. After these fraudulent purchases were verified and approved by Roads Division employees, Gibson took possession of the equipment, paid Gunn for the items, and resold the generators and other items for personal profit.

A review of invoices from Wayne County vendors revealed that between January 16, 2019, and August 3, 2021, Wayne County vendors purchased 596 generators, and a variety of other power equipment including lawnmowers, chain-saws, and backpack blowers.

"This is the one of the worst types of betrayal of the public trust. Wayne County remains committed to sussing out corruption where we find it - no matter who is involved. We continue this work today. I want to thank CEO Evans for his continued cooperation, my detectives, and especially the United States Attorney's office for their successful prosecution of the defendant," Wayne County Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy said.

Pursuant to the terms of his plea agreement, Gunn faces a sentencing guideline range of 57-71 months in prison. Sentencing has been set for May 31.

Conspiracy to commit federal program theft carries a maximum sentence of up to 5 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000. Federal program theft carries a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000.

United States Attorney Dawn Ison said, "(The) guilty plea is the culmination of months of collaboration between our federal, state, and local law enforcement officers who worked together to seek justice for the citizens of the Eastern District of Michigan. We thank Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and her uncompromising efforts to eliminate corrupt public officials who abuse their power and steal from the hardworking taxpayers of Wayne County."

LANSING, Mich. - Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson will receive the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Joe Biden in a White House ceremony on Friday, Jan. 6 for her work protecting democracy. The medal is the nation's second-highest civilian award and will be presented on the second anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"I'm deeply honored to receive the Presidential Citizens Medal from the President of the United States for my work to ensure democracy prevails in Michigan and throughout the nation," said Benson. "As the heroes who stood guard over the nation's electoral votes at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, can attest, defending every voice and every vote requires courage and commitment to country, our Constitution, and the will of the American voters. This extraordinary recognition affirms in me the hope that we will emerge out of this moment with a democracy that has not only prevailed, but is stronger, healthier, and more robust than ever before. That is what I fight for, what I have hope for, and what I have confidence that all of us working together - coming together across party lines and all else that could divide us - can achieve."

The Presidential Citizens Medal is awarded to Americans for exemplary deeds or services performed for a person's country or fellow citizens. It was established by Executive Order under President Nixon in 1969. Previous recipients include Hank Aaron, Ruby Bridges, Gen. Colin Powell, and Muhammad Ali.

Benson received the medal alongside other democracy defenders including election workers and Capitol Police in a ceremony at the White House on Friday at 2 p.m.

The White House also honored the following people with a Presidential Citizens Medal on Friday:

- Rusty Bowers served as the Arizona House Speaker during the 2020 election, resisting pressure from those seeking to overturn the election results. He received the 2022 John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage award.
- Harry Dunn is a Capitol Police Officer who defended the Capitol on January 6th, facing racial slurs and harassment from rioters. Dunn has served in the Capitol Police force for nearly 15 years.
- Caroline Edwards was the first law enforcement officer injured by rioters on January 6th. Even after suffering a traumatic brain injury, Officer Edwards worked to prevent rioters from entering the Capitol building. Officer Edwards has served in law enforcement for nearly six years.
- Michael Fanone served as a Metropolitan Police Department Officer and defended

the Capitol on January 6th, suffering injuries during the attack. After the attack, he resigned from the Metropolitan Police Department, having served for 20 years after joining in the wake of September 11th.

- Ruby Freeman served as an election worker in Fulton County, Georgia, during the 2020 election. Ms. Freeman worked to ensure that the people of Georgia could vote freely and fairly, and, for simply doing her job, was forced to withstand efforts to overturn the election that targeted and threatened her and her family.
- Aquilino Gonell served as a Capitol Police Sergeant and defended the Capitol on January 6th, suffering injuries during the attack. Sergeant Gonell is an emigrant from the Dominican Republic and a U.S. Army veteran who served in Iraq.
- Eugene Goodman is a Capitol Police Officer who defended the Capitol on January 6th. He is credited with diverting rioters from the floor of the Senate while members were still evacuating. Officer Goodman is a U.S. Army veteran and, from January 20, 2021, to March 2, 2021, served as Acting Deputy Sergeant at Arms of the U.S. Senate.
- Daniel Hodges is a Metropolitan Police Department Officer who defended the Capitol on January 6th, suffering injuries during the attack. The day of the attack was Hodges's first time ever in the Capitol. Officer Hodges has served in the Metropolitan Police Department for over seven years.
- Shayne Moss served as an election worker in Fulton County, Georgia, during the 2020 election. Like her mother, Ruby Freeman - who was also a Fulton County election worker and will also receive the Presidential Citizen Medal - Ms. Moss was subjected to threats and harassment in the wake of the election. Ms. Moss received the 2022 John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage award.
- Al Schmidt is a former federal civil servant and served as a city commissioner on the Philadelphia County Board of Elections. During the 2020 election, he kept the vote tally going in the face of pressure and efforts to overturn the election.
- Brian Sicknick (posthumous) was a Capitol Police officer who defended the Capitol on January 6th. After he lost his life protecting our elected representatives, Officer Sicknick was laid in honor in the Capitol rotunda in February 2021. The President, the First Lady, the Vice President, and the Second Gentleman visited to pay respects. In addition to guarding the Capitol for over a decade, Officer Sicknick also served in the New Jersey Air National Guard and was deployed to Saudi Arabia and Kyrgyzstan.

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