

## Philadelphia DA 'judge shopping' by trying bribery case in Harrisburg, lawmaker's attorney says

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SWATARA TOWNSHIP -- The lawyer for a state lawmaker accused of accepting money from an undercover informant plans to fight future Dauphin County Court hearings related to her case.

"It is judge shopping. It is the [Philadelphia] district attorney judge shopping because it would be much more favorable for us to try this in Philadelphia," said A. Charles Peruto Jr., who is representing state Rep. Louise E. Bishop. "If we did that, we would get disbarred."

Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams charged Bishop, 81, with bribery, conspiracy and related charges after investigators said she **took money from an undercover informant** in exchange for political favors.

The charges against the Philadelphia Democrat were bound over for Dauphin County Court on Wednesday when Bishop waived her right to a preliminary hearing before Magisterial District Judge Michael Smith, nearly two hours after the hearing's scheduled start time.

Peruto said there was a miscommunication about the hearing's start time and added that while his client waived her hearing Wednesday, he plans to file the appropriate motion to contest that there is "any court jurisdiction whatsoever" in the Harrisburg area. He intends to file the motion once the case is assigned to a Dauphin County Court of Common Pleas judge.

Peruto argued that trying the case in Philadelphia would place Bishop among a jury of her peers, and said "the [Philadelphia] district attorney knows that with all of the good deeds she has done for Philadelphia, there might be people who vote not guilty for that reason alone."

Bishop previously appeared before a grand jury, where, according to charging documents, the jury heard recorded conversations between the

Former State Rep. Louise Bishop enters magisterial district court in Dauphin County with her attorney Wednesday afternoon

Former State Rep. Louise Bishop enters magisterial district court in Dauphin County with her attorney A. Charles Peruto Wednesday afternoon. Bishop, a Democrat from Philadelphia is part of a group of current and former politicians facing charges related to bribery.

representative and the undercover informant. The charges, Peruto said, are tied to the Philadelphia area and therefore should be tried there.

"The allegations are that [Bishop] accepted money in Philadelphia, a Philadelphia grand jury heard the evidence, a Philadelphia judge supervised the grand jury and what could possibly be the jurisdiction in Harrisburg, except for the fact that it is a friendly forum for the district attorney?" he asked.

Harold James, 64 and a former representative, waived his preliminary hearing earlier Wednesday and Rep. Michelle Brownlee, 58, waived her preliminary hearing in the case on March 10. The pair, both also Philadelphia Democrats, has been charged with counts similar to the charges brought against Bishop.

The trio is part of a group of current and former public officials who allegedly accepted money from the informant in exchange for their help with government contracts, appropriations or policy initiatives.

Charging documents state that Bishop is accused of accepting three cash payments totaling \$1,500 from the informant; James is accused of accepting one payment of \$750 from the informant; and Brownlee is accused of accepting one payment of \$2,000 from the informant.

Philadelphia Assistant District Attorney Mark Gilson represented the commonwealth on Wednesday during the standard proceedings.

Williams filed the criminal charges against the lawmakers after Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane rejected the case in 2013. Kane dropped the case, claiming it was flawed based on witness credibility problems, entrapment issues and racial targeting allegations.

Bishop, James and Brownlee are all free from custody on \$50,000 unsecured bail. They are each expected to appear May 8 in Dauphin County Court for formal arraignment hearings.

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