

Corrine Brown Found Guilty of 18 Charges of Fraud and Tax Evasion



Summary: *Former Congresswoman Corrine Brown was found guilty by a jury of 18 charges of fraud and tax evasion for taking money from a charity that was supposed to support poor students.*

Former Florida Congresswoman Corrine Brown was found guilty of fraud. Brown was indicted last year, aiding in the loss of her position during the last election. She was accused of and found guilty of taking money from a charity that was supposed to be providing scholarships to low-income students.

Prosecutors presented a detailed criminal case with the help of former chief of staff Elias “Ronnie” Simmons, who pleaded guilty once the federal indictments were handed out. They showed a routine of fraud by the 70-year-old Democrat that included using the charity’s money for lavish parties, trips, and spending. Of the 22 charges filed against her, she was found guilty by the jury on 18 of them. When the judge read the verdict, Brown had no visible response.

Assistant U.S. Attorney General Leslie Caldwell said, “Congresswoman Brown and her chief of staff are alleged to have used the congresswoman’s official position to solicit over \$800,000 in donations to a supposed charitable organization, only to use that organization as a personal slush fund.”

The charges against Brown, who had represented the Jacksonville area district of Florida for over ten years included lying on her taxes and congressional financial disclosure forms. She had pleaded not guilty to all the charges. The others charged included Simmons and One Door for Education Foundation President Carla Wiley. They both pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and testified against Brown.

Prosecutors do note that One Door for Education gave out one \$1,200 scholarship to an unidentified person in Florida. The remainder of the \$800,000 raised between 2012 and 2016 was used for parties and personal expenses. Simmons explained in his testimony that Brown would frequently order him to take cash and checks from the charity’s account. During these occasions, he would be directed to deposit the maximum \$800 from the account at an ATM near his house and then deposit hundreds into her personal account. He would often keep some for himself.

Brown claimed that she was unaware of what would happen with the charity’s money, placing the blame on Simmons. She says that all the financial details were left to Simmons and other hired staffers, admitting that she should have paid more attention to the finances of One Door.

She will be sentenced at a later day in 90 days or more. If she had been convicted of all charges, they would have added up to 357 years in prison.

The FBI Jacksonville Division stated, “Former Congresswoman Brown took an oath year after year to serve others, but instead she exploited the needs of children and deceived her constituents to advance her own personal and political agendas. Corrupt public officials undermine the integrity of our government and violate the public’s trust, and that is why investigating public corruption remains the FBI’s top criminal priority.”

What sentence would you give Brown? Tell us in the comments below.

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