

STALLWORTH: I AM GUILTY - GOVERNOR TO DECIDE WHETHER HE'LL LOSE COUNTY POST

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Wayne County Commissioner **Keith Stallworth** pleaded guilty to a federal felony in connection to a drug case Friday. Now it may be up to Gov. Jennifer Granholm to determine if he can keep his seat on the county commission.

The commission will ask Granholm to clarify who has the authority to remove a member.

Stallworth, a 46-year-old Democrat from Detroit and former state representative, pleaded guilty to one count of structuring a financial transaction to evade federal currency reporting requirements, a 5-year felony.

Stallworth, former owner of a Detroit strip club, was among 14 people indicted June 27, 2001, on charges of money laundering and drug conspiracy.

In return for what could be a lenient sentence of 4 to 7 months imprisonment, Stallworth agreed to cooperate in the prosecution of the 13 other defendants, including Milton (Butch) Jones, cofounder of the notorious drug gang Young Boys Inc.

Stallworth made no comment after pleading guilty before U.S. District Judge John Corbett O'Meara, who warned the veteran politician that the guilty plea could affect his rights to vote, to hold public office and to have a gun.

His attorney, Christopher Andreoff, said he could not answer questions about Stallworth's political future.

Bill Johnson, a spokesman for Wayne County Commission Chairwoman Jewel Ware, said the commission's lawyer would send a letter to Granholm by Monday "to ask her to clarify any legal ambiguities on who has the authority to act in this matter."

Stallworth's sentencing was set for June 23. If O'Meara gives him a longer sentence, Stallworth can withdraw his guilty plea and go to trial.

At Friday's hearing, Stallworth admitted directing someone named Calvin Jones -- who officials said is not related to Milton Jones -- to purchase four cashier checks totaling \$20,000 from the Michigan National Bank in Detroit on March 16, 1998.

Federal officials said the money was from drug transactions that were laundered through the adult entertainment bar Stallworth then owned.

"I'm sorry, your honor," Stallworth said.

He served six years as a state representative but left that office in 2002 because of term limits and ran for the commission. He won election from the county's 6th District in November.

The commission's legal staff determined that an elected county official was ineligible to hold office if convicted of a felony involving voter fraud but it was not clear if state law requires removal of an elected official convicted of other types of felonies.

Sage Eastman, a spokesman for Attorney General Mike Cox, said state election law gives the governor the authority to remove an elected official "in certain instances; one of those instances would be conviction of a felony."

Granholm's deputy press secretary, Mary Dettloff, said the governor's office must review the Wayne County Charter and federal court documents in Stallworth's case before making any decision.

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Caption: Photo

Keith Stallworth

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Page: 3A

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