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Worthy praised for strength

Political cred high, but says she won't seek higher office

BY DAVID ASHENFELTER AND CASSANDRA SPRATLING • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS • SEPTEMBER 5, 2008

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RASHAUN RUCKER/Detroit Free Press

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy said the deal with Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick was on her terms, not his. "These were not the mayor's conditions. ... These were our conditions," Worthy said Thursday after the mayor pleaded guilty at the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit.

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Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy won high praise Thursday from legal experts and others for hanging tough in the negotiations that led to Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick pleading guilty to felony charges in the text messaging scandal.

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They said Worthy drove a hard bargain in demanding that Kilpatrick resign, serve four months in jail and pay \$1 million in restitution to the city. She originally wanted a 6-month jail sentence. Still, they said she raised her political profile if she decides to run for higher office.

"She's definitely solidified her political future," said Kamau

Marable of the Urban Consulting Group, a Detroit-based political consulting firm. "Whether you were for or against the mayor, everybody universally sees her as a very strong prosecutor who will do what's right and not take any stuff."

But Worthy, 51, said she has no interest in seeking higher office -- including running for mayor of Detroit.

"This is the job I want," she told the Free Press on Thursday. "I don't have any further aspirations beyond this job... this term and then another."

After Kilpatrick pleaded guilty, Worthy told reporters that the deal she cut with Kilpatrick's lawyers were her terms, not theirs.

"These were not the mayor's conditions, as were reported by many of you," Worthy said. "These were our conditions, and again, there was no give. We are very happy about the agreement."

Legal experts said the deal was a good one for Worthy and the city.

"The deal the mayor agreed to ... is a major victory for the prosecutor, the mayor and the people of the City of Detroit and State of Michigan," said Larry Dubin, a University of Detroit Mercy law professor.

"Prosecutor Worthy should be highly commended for the way she prosecuted this case," Dubin added. "She has demonstrated integrity in holding a public official accountable for serious criminal violations that constituted serious breaches of the public trust."

People who know Worthy said they weren't surprised by her determination to hold the mayor accountable for lying at last year's police whistle-blower trial when he and his former chief of staff, Christine Beatty, denied having an

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extramarital affair and misled the jury about firing Deputy Police Chief Gary Brown.

The scandal erupted in late January when the Free Press published excerpts from Beatty's text messaging device showing that they had lied to the jury.

Worthy, the daughter of a retired Army colonel, was born in Ft. Sill, Okla., and grew up on military bases in the South and in Germany.

After graduating from high school in Alexandria, Va., she obtained a political science and economic degree in 1979 from the University of Michigan, and a law degree in 1984 from the University of Notre Dame.

Afterward, she joined the Wayne County Prosecutor's juvenile division, prosecuting violent teenagers and parents in child abuse cases. Two years later, her star began to rise when she was assigned to the criminal division to prosecute complex, difficult and high-profile felony cases.

In 1993, she acquired a national profile by persuading a jury to convict two white cops -- Larry Nevers and Walter Budzyn -- of second-degree murder for the infamous fatal beating of Malice Green outside a Detroit drug house.

Worthy surprised courtroom observers and her own colleagues with her passionate, aggressive courtroom performance. The trial was covered by Court TV and helped Worthy become a national legal commentator.

In 1994, Worthy successfully prosecuted Toni Cato Riggs for arranging the 1991 murder of her husband, a Gulf War veteran, to collect his life insurance. The defense lawyer in the case was Athina Siringas, who eventually became a prosecutor and was on the team that prosecuted Kilpatrick.

Later that year, Worthy was elected judge of Records Court, which eventually merged with Wayne County Circuit Court. But Worthy wanted to be Wayne County prosecutor and stepped down from the bench in 2003 to run against Prosecutor Mike Duggan. Circuit Court judges appointed her interim prosecutor when Duggan quit to run the Detroit Medical Center.

She's the county's first black and first woman prosecutor. But her tenure as prosecutor hasn't been without controversy. Within days of charging Kilpatrick in the text message case and scolding him for committing perjury, she belatedly suspended the head of her major narcotics unit, for allegedly allowing a confidential informant and two Inkster cops to give false testimony in a 2005 cocaine case.

Last month, the Free Press reported that Worthy was behind on her property taxes and on the verge of losing her home through foreclosure.

Political experts said the problems might embarrass Worthy but wouldn't hurt her politically.

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Contact **DAVID ASHENFELTER** at dashenfelter@freepress.com. Staff writers Jim Schaefer, Joe Swickard and Ben Schmitt contributed to this report.

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Newest first



foster wrote:

Replying to notimpressed:



Replying to AngryLib:

I still don't see how Nelthorpe & Brown weren't charged with extortion. ...

Perhaps you should reread comments by Stefani concerning this issue. ... If they conduct themselves honestly in the execution of their office, they don't have anything to worry about.

Here's the thing. Stephani wasn't negotiating for his clients, he was in mediation for his fees.

The negotiations had broken down, so Stephani told the mediator to give the famous envelope to KK's 'team', it was the motion he was filing with the judge in the morning. The motion contained excerpts from the text message transcripts which seem to prove that KK and CB lied under oath. The settlement added a third case that never went to trial.

Fees and costs for the lawyer and \$\$ for the plaintiff are not the same. Out of one pocket, (Detroit's) into several, cops + lawyers.

09/11/2008 6:04:55 p.m. EDT

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beetle1207 wrote:

Bravo, Kym Worthy! You are the very essence of women all over the world. Especially, Black women! Thank you having the "guts" that the religious leaders didn't have, the business community didn't have, and all those so-called starch supports like Monica Conyers, Frankie Darcell, Martha Reeves, Barbara Rose Collins, Sheffield, Mongo, Anthony, and so on didn't have. You are my hero!

09/06/2008 12:39:54 a.m. EDT

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vannajoyce wrote:

Replying to margiememargie:



I think it should have went to trial. There is absolutely no justice done in this case. He should have been sent to prison for 15 years the maximum allowed under law in the U.S. All Men Are Created Equal. If you are paid to do a job for the public, paid to do that job, with tax money, you should be held accountable when you steal millions from us. Every criminal should get the same punishment. How can they justify giving the next criminal more time. In Flint if you were your pants baggy, you ccan get 93 days in jail?? This scum kwame did worse crime, and gets the same??? Explain how in America this can happen !!!!

Its the SAME AMERICA where George W. Bush perpetrated a big fraud with this war that to me is criminal beyond words that is costing trillions of tax payer dollars and ain't nobody saying s*** (nothing that amounts to anything) about it. But that's another story.

09/05/2008 9:17:00 p.m. EDT

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phritz wrote:

Worthy For Vice President!!!

09/05/2008 7:53:45 p.m. EDT

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vannajoyce wrote:

Thank you, Kym. Thank you. I KNEW when you brought charges against them you would see them thru. I know you were just doing your job but YOU ARE MY HERO!
09/05/2008 5:59:27 p.m. EDT

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