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POLITICS

Trump commutes sentence of Dr. Salomon Melgen, eye doctor found guilty of Medicare fraud

Dr. Salomon Melgen had offices from Port St. Lucie to Delray Beach

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In one of his final acts as president, Donald Trump pardoned and commuted the sentences 143 people, including a Palm Beach County doctor who some federal prosecutors say [was connected to the biggest Medicare fraud case in U.S. history](#).

Dr. Salomon Melgen, [who was serving a 17-year sentence for health-care fraud](#), had his sentence commuted by Trump on Wednesday along with others including former White House advisor Stephen Bannon and South Florida rapper Kodak Black

Melgen, a 66-year-old retinologist, had eye clinics from Port St. Lucie to Delray Beach. He [was convicted in 2018](#) after investigators said he falsely diagnosed and treated hundreds of elderly patients for macular degeneration, defrauding Medicare and other insurers out of millions of dollars over the years.

On Wednesday, Melgen said he was grateful for Trump and for "recognizing the injustice" he had endured. Through the years, Melgen has maintained his innocence.

"Throughout this ordeal, I have come to realize the very deep flaws in our justice system and how people are at the complete mercy of prosecutors and judges,"

Melgen said in a prepared statement. "As of today, I am committed to fighting for unjustly incarcerated people."

Once released, he will live with his wife in West Palm Beach as she continues to battle cancer.

Melgen's lawyer, Samuel A. Stern, said he knows the doctor will continue to lead a productive life and that this commutation helps him move past the nearly decade-long battle.

"I am delighted with this result and wish him and his family the best," Stern said in his own prepared statement. "For the 100-plus people, including his former patients and employees, who wrote letters in support of his commutation, thank you."

[According to a statement from the White House](#), numerous patients and friends of Melgen testified "to his generosity in treating all patients especially those unable to pay or unable to afford health-care insurance."

In addition to being convicted of dozens counts of healthcare fraud, Melgen was accused of influencing his longtime friend, U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey.

Prosecutors claimed Melgen and the Democrat operated as a mutually beneficial bribery team: Melgen gave Menendez gifts and campaign contributions and in return, the senator pressured federal agencies to help Melgen.

The White House said the commutation was supported by several people, including Menendez and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla.

Melgen was [not the only Palm Beach County resident pardoned](#) in the weeks leading up to the end of Trump's presidency.

In December, Trump pardoned former Palm Beach County Commissioner Mary McCarty and Boca Raton real-estate mogul James Batmasian.

McCarty pleaded guilty in 2009 to a federal charge of fraud for using her public office to help her husband's business. She also admitted to accepting free or discounted hotel rooms from a business that won a county contract.

She was one of four commissioners — along with Jeff Koons, Tony Masilotti and Warren Newell — who were charged with public corruption.

McCarty, who was elected five times to the County Commission starting in 1990, served 21 months of a three-and-a-half-year sentence.

Batmasian served eight months in federal prison in 2008 for failing to pay the IRS about \$250,000 in payroll taxes. Since then, Batmasian and his wife have been tied to former Boca Raton Mayor Susan Haynie, who is awaiting trial for alleged public corruption.

Soon after a 2017 Palm Beach Post investigation revealed Haynie's financial ties to the Batmasians, among the largest commercial landowners in Boca Raton, Haynie was charged with official misconduct, perjury, misuse of public office, corrupt misuse of official position and failure to disclose voting conflicts.

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