

Tonia Bandy, ex-wife of former prison warden Nate Cain, to plead guilty in corruption case

[BY GORDON RUSSELL |_grussell@theadvocate.com](mailto:gRussell@theadvocate.com) Jun 28, 2018 - 3:33 pm

The ex-wife and co-defendant of former Louisiana prison warden Nate Cain intends to plead guilty in the federal corruption case in which the two are charged, court records indicate.

Tonia Bandy Cain, who asked in a divorce petition last year to return to her maiden name of Bandy, is due at the federal courthouse in Alexandria on July 9 for what's known as a change of plea hearing.

Both Bandy and Cain face a single count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud plus 17 counts of wire fraud. The two are accused of using state-billed credit cards to make dozens of personal purchases, ranging from furniture and televisions to guns and ammunition, when they both worked at the Avoyelles Parish Correctional Center in Cottonport.

Cain, 51, the eldest son of Burl Cain, the former longtime warden of the maximum-security state penitentiary at Angola, was the warden of the Avoyelles prison, now known as the Raymond Laborde Correctional Center.

Bandy, 43, was promoted to business manager of the prison on his watch. The couple's divorce was finalized in November.

While neither Bandy nor Nate Cain had a state credit card in their own name, investigators say they directed subordinates who did have such cards to buy things for them.

Bandy's plea deal presumably will call for her to plead guilty to one or more of

those counts, with others being dismissed by the government.

Bandy's lawyer, public defender Cristie Gautreaux Gibbens, did not immediately return a call seeking comment about the terms of the upcoming plea.

Typically, such plea deals require the defendant pleading guilty to agree to cooperate with the government, usually by testifying against their alleged co-conspirator — in this case, her ex-husband.

Such a requirement could hurt Nate Cain's chances of acquittal at a trial and potentially prompt him to take a deal as well. His lawyer, John McLindon, said Thursday that he and his client "are still evaluating all of our options."

"Right now, we are anticipating going to trial," McLindon said. "But that could change. We're still evaluating the case. I'm not really sure what's going to happen yet."

The plea comes shortly after a magistrate judge [ruled against Cain and Bandy](#) on a crucial motion in which McLindon sought to suppress evidence seized in a search of the couple's home at the prison in Cottonport.

The raid on their home, led by agents from the state Office of Inspector General, occurred in June 2016, a month after both Cain and Bandy resigned their posts at the prison amid a series of newspaper articles about possible misconduct and self-dealing.

No trial date has been set for Nate Cain's federal case, which is being prosecuted in the Western District of Louisiana.

Both Cain and Bandy also face state charges filed by the Avoyelles Parish District Attorney's Office related to their tenure at the Cottonport lockup.

Bandy is accused of stealing tens of thousands of dollars in cash from a fund meant to benefit inmates' clubs. She is charged with malfeasance in office,

injuring public records and theft of \$25,000 or more.

Cain, meanwhile, [faces a state charge](#) of obstruction of justice for his role in allegedly foiling an investigation into a rape at the prison.

Both of those cases are scheduled to be tried before juries on Sept. 17, according to the District Attorney's Office.

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