

Written by Kathy
Monday, 04 April 2022 22:05



Pictured are former Cuyahoga County auditor Frank Russo and former county commissioner Jimmy Dimora, Dimora also a former chair of the county Democratic party

Clevelandurbannews.com and Kathywraycolemanonlinenewsblog.com , the most read Black digital newspaper and Black blog in Ohio and in the Midwest.

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By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor

CLEVELAND, Ohio -Frank Russo (pictured), a former big wig with the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party alongside former Cuyahoga County commissioner Jimmy Dimora has died. He had been released from prison to serve the remaining seven years of his public corruption sentence on house arrest in his Independence home. He was originally sentenced to 22 years but his sentence was later reduced to 14 years.

He suffered from diabetes and heart problems and was released from the federal penitentiary in 2020 for such reasons, as well as- due to the coronavirus pandemic.

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A former Mayfield Hts councilman, county recorder during the early 80s, and county auditor from 1997 until 2010, Russo was convicted in 2009 on public corruption charges relative to a longstanding county public corruption scandal that took off in 1998 and has seen more than 75 Democratic party affiliates charged and convicted., mainly businessmen but also including two former common pleas judges who served prison time and a host of others

Then-U.S. District Judge Kate O'Malley sentenced him to 22 years in federal prison in December 2010 via a plea deal, and Dimora, also a former powerful chair of the county Democratic party, was later sentenced to 28 years after a jury convicted him of federal corruption charges.

County Democrats say for the most part that the sentences against Russo, Dimora and nearly the whole group of cases that the Akron judge presided over were excessive and pushed by O'Malley, allegedly to appease Republicans and others, including the Plain Dealer Newspaper, Ohio's largest newspaper that published a plethora of articles and editorials condemning the corruption.

Russo's sentence had been reduced by nearly eight years because he cooperated with federal officials and allegedly snitched, sources say, on other Democrats. He also was ordered to pay nearly \$7 million in restitution. Prosecutors said he and Dimora ran a political machine cultivated through bribes, gifts and other illegalities.

Dimora said during his criminal ordeal that he had allegedly bribed at least 10 area Democratic judges to fix cases. Cooperating with the federal government, Russo testified against his former friend at his corruption trial. Then 56, a jury found Dimora guilty on 36 counts, including racketeering, bribery, conspiracy Hobbs Act conspiracy, and tax charges,

With the Plain Dealer at the helm and pushing for alternatives, the public corruption fallout led to an unprecedented change in county government. That voter adopted change in county governance, which took effect in 2011, replaced three county commissioners and the county elected offices, all but the still-elected common please judges and county prosecutor, with an elected county executive and 11-member county council.

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Those appointed county offices that the county executive now makes include the sheriff, county auditor, clerk of courts, fiscal officer, and county treasurer

Black leaders and the Cleveland NAACP, led by former county commissioner Peter Lawson Jones, then Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge and then Cleveland NAACP president George Forbes, a former Cleveland City Council president, opposed the change in county governance before it was approved by voters in 2009 by a two-to-one margin. At the time they worried that the current county governance disenfranchises voters and Black people, and puts too much power in the hands of one official, a county executive, now Armond Budish, a Democrat and former speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives.

Budish is not seeking reelection to another four-year term this year after his office was raided twice by the FBI following questionable deaths of some 10 or more inmates in the troubled county jail since 2018. He has also faced criminal investigations of his inner staff and convictions of key members of his administration. including the former jail warden, jail director, and human resources director.

By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor. Coleman is a seasoned Black Cleveland journalist who trained at the Call and Post Newspaper for 17 years and an experienced investigative and political reporter. She is the most read independent journalist in Ohio per Alexa.com

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(216) 659-0473. Email: editor@clevelandurbannews.com. We interviewed former president Barack Obama one-on-one when he was campaigning for president. As to the Obama interview

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