

Court Proceedings in Bridge Scandal Begin in February

Feb. 5 court date for former Christie aides falls between Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary

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Court proceedings in the George Washington Bridge lane-closure scandal involving New Jersey Gov. [Chris Christie](#)'s former aides are to begin in February as the presidential primaries get under way.

Federal Judge Susan Wigenton issued an order to begin proceedings on Feb. 5 following motions by the two ex-Christie aides named in the high-profile case.

The date comes one day before Mr. Christie, a Republican candidate for president, is expected to take to the debate stage to face his rivals. It falls just four days before New Hampshire primary voters cast their ballots Feb. 9 and four days after the Iowa caucuses Feb. 1.

Mr. Christie has staked much of his campaign on a strong showing in New Hampshire to help turn improving poll numbers into momentum in other early primary states. A Christie campaign spokeswoman declined to comment on Tuesday. Lawyers for the defendants didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

The two former Christie aides were indicted in May by federal prosecutors on charges that they conspired to close lanes leading to the bridge spanning New York and New Jersey for five mornings in September 2013. The trial, tentatively scheduled to start in April, will take place at the of the U.S. District Court of New Jersey, in Newark.

The closures caused gridlock in Fort Lee, N.J., at the bridge's western end. Former aide Bridget Kelly and Bill Baroni, a Christie ally, allegedly concocted the scheme to punish Fort Lee's mayor for not endorsing Mr. Christie for re-election in 2013.

A third defendant pleaded guilty to criminal charges in May and has been cooperating with prosecutors. Ms. Kelly is a former deputy chief of staff to Mr. Christie, and Mr. Baroni was a deputy executive director at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Attorneys for the ex-aides said their clients are innocent, and have vigorously defended them in legal filings over the intervening months. Mr. Christie has said he had nothing to do with the affair, and federal prosecutors didn't name him in their complaint.

Media organizations, including The Wall Street Journal, have sought a list of unindicted co-conspirators who were alluded to but not named in the government's complaint. The government has so far declined to unseal the list.

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