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STEVEN PAYNE FOUND GUILTY OF SEXUAL BATTERY

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces that a Duval County jury found Steven Payne guilty of Sexual Battery. With the verdict, Payne faces up to life in Florida State Prison. The Honorable Meredith Charbula will sentence Payne at a later date.

Payne, a former at-large senator from the U.S. Virgin Islands, became the victim's guardian around 2016 while she was living in the U.S. Virgin Islands for school. The victim moved to Florida after being displaced by Hurricane Irma, and eventually moved to Jacksonville to live with Payne's sister. The day after Payne moved her into his sister's house, he committed a sexual battery on her. She felt fearful and terrified during the incident. An additional victim not within Duval County was identified and interviewed; she relayed that Payne attempted to commit a sexual battery on her in 2005 and that incident was used as Williams Rule evidence during trial.

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and prosecuted by Jackie Blair and Shaina Ruth.