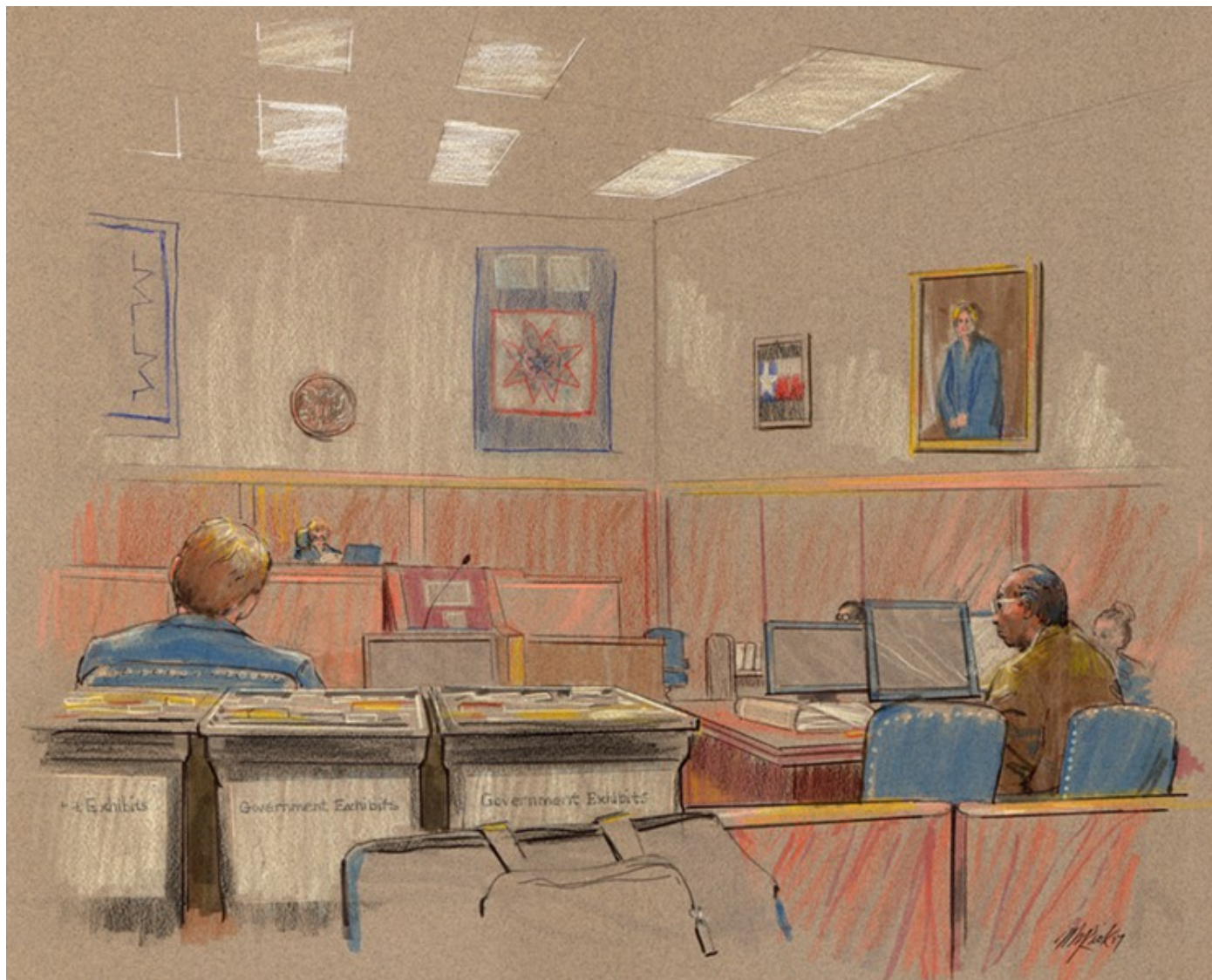


# John Wiley Price Trial: Your Week 1 Recap

By [Stephen Young](#)



The scene from the courtroom.

*Gary Myrick*

**Finally, after almost a decade of investigation, nearly three years**

**of trial delays and a week of jury selection and indictment reading, the *United States of America v. John Wiley Price, et al.*** began in earnest last week with opening statements. The *Observer* was there, as we will be throughout the public corruption trial, keeping watch in U.S. District Judge Barbara Lynn's courtroom. Here's a recap of the week's events:

### **The prosecution has a better narrative.**

The federal prosecutors trying Price have enjoyed one distinct advantage so far. They have a straight line narrative of the case, at least with regard to the bribery allegations against Price. Price, the feds said in opening arguments, exerted his considerable influence on the county contract process for companies that paid political consultant Kathy Nealy to lobby Price. In return Nealy kicked some of the cash she was paid to Price. It's a story that, if the government can prove it, makes sense.

### **The jurors are dropping like flies, and we aren't just talking about their attention spans.**

On Wednesday, Lynn excused a juror because of illness. The juror was the second to bite the dust during the trial so far, raising the specter of a mistrial. Initially, 16 jurors were selected to hear the case from a panel of 70. Of those jurors, four of whom are alternates, only 14 remain. If three more are excused, the defense will be legally entitled to a mistrial, although the Supreme Court has affirmed that criminal cases can proceed with fewer than 12 jurors if both sides agree. Judge Lynn, who's admitted that she's concerned at the attrition rate, urged the remaining jurors to take their vitamins over the weekend.

### **That doesn't mean the attention span thing isn't a real problem.**

While nothing will top the word-for-word reading of the 107-page indictment

against Price and his co-conspirators for the trial's most soporific moment, many on the jury have struggled to remain alert during the trial action that's followed. The labored, arduous opening statement from Price's lead attorney, Shirley Baccus-Lobel, and the government's direct examination of a trio of FBI employees were similarly stupefying, but for different reasons. Baccus-Lobel gave jurors a series of scattered musings that didn't come close to framing a theory of the case, and the FBI testimony, from two agents and a forensic accountant, attempted to build a foundation for a house that can't yet be seen. There was a lot of talk about bank transactions and how Dallas County functions, but not much narrative.

### **There's some good stuff coming about Price's "fondness for women."**

Baccus-Lobel said it during her opening statement, Price was or is "fond" of Dapheny Fain, Nealy and Karen Manning, the three women tied into the bribery scheme that the feds alleged netted Price close to \$1 million. That's why, according to the defense, he was so eager to loan money to Fain and Nealy and let Manning exhibit and sell off his collection of African art. The payments received by Price, the ones the feds claim far exceed any real loan or art value, aren't bribes, or in Manning's case money laundering, they're just evidence of all the off-the-books business Price did with the trio, Baccus-Lobel argued.

At some point the defense is going to have to go into some detail about Price's relationships with Fain, Nealy and Manning. Judging from Price's reputation — it was just last year that former City Council member Dwaine Caraway accused Price of wrecking Caraway's marriage by having sex with Caraway's first wife — they could be pretty salacious.

## **Marlo Cadeddu is going to be the trial's breakout star.**

Cadeddu, one of the lawyers on Fain's defense team, single-handedly reinvigorated the courtroom Thursday afternoon with her tough cross-examination of FBI forensic accountant David Garcia. Rattling off a series of questions about payments between Fain and Price not included in the government charges, Cadeddu frustrated both the court reporter, who struggled to keep up, and Garcia, who was forced to admit that the picture of the financial interactions between Price and Fain painted by the feds might not be complete. Cadeddu, a former international banker, has the chops and knowledge needed to prod effectively at the government's case.