

Mann Act amendment reopens Allen sex crimes case



On February 5, 2016, **U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/http://www.sullivan.senate.gov/>), Alaska Attorney General **Craig Richards** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/http://law.alaska.gov/department/ag.html>) and **John Skidmore** (https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/http://law.alaska.gov/department/criminal/criminal_div.html) of the Alaska Department of Law held a joint press conference to announce the creation of a new Public Integrity Unit designed to give the office of special prosecutions better tools and greater resources to fight corruption. And while the unit's broader mission includes Alaska's ongoing problem with inmate deaths in prisons or jail and police-involved shootings, it was clear from the press conference (embedded below) that the main focus was public corruption in the state—specifically a series of scandals involving VECO founder and oilman Bill Allen.

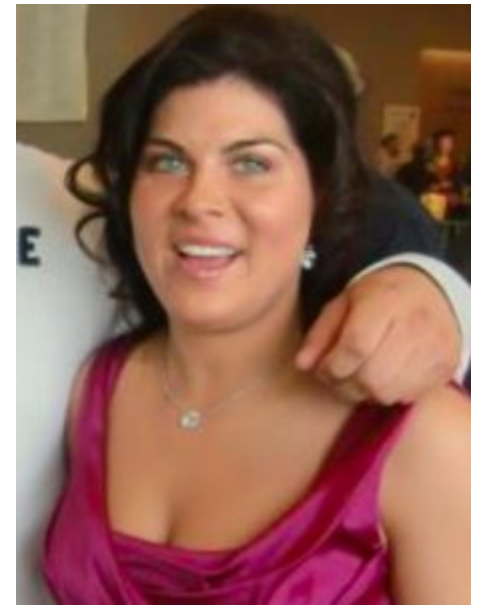
Allen's rise in Alaska reads like a twisted version of the American Dream. Born in Depression-era New Mexico, Allen dropped out of school at 16 to work in the oil fields as a welder, a job which would lead him to Alaska in 1968—just as the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System brought an influx of money and a Wild West attitude to the young state. Starting with just one truck, Allen purchased a pipeline maintenance company named Veltri Enterprises, renaming it VE Construction in 1970, then VECO in 1979.

But for Allen, the wealth he accumulated from his expanding oil business became a tool with which to manipulate the political system in Alaska. In 1985, Allen ran afoul of campaign finance laws after it was revealed that VECO had been taking illegal deductions from employees' payroll checks and funneling the money to Allen-approved candidates. This first glimpse at the unethical nature by which Allen conducted business was quickly forgotten, however, due to one of the greatest ecological disasters in United States history: the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Prince William Sound. VECO and Allen were praised for their

quick response to the disaster, and the company's cleanup efforts generated a lot of good will in Alaska and nationally.

In the years after the spill, Allen continued trying to expand his influence in Alaska, purchasing the *Anchorage Times* newspaper in 1990, a short-lived venture which would result in the sale of the paper in 1992—and an ongoing “Voice of the Times” column Allen would write for the buyer, *the Anchorage Daily News*, for years to come. Allen also continued using his money to influence politicians, engaging in an ongoing series of bribes which would be the focus of a federal investigation throughout the mid-2000s.

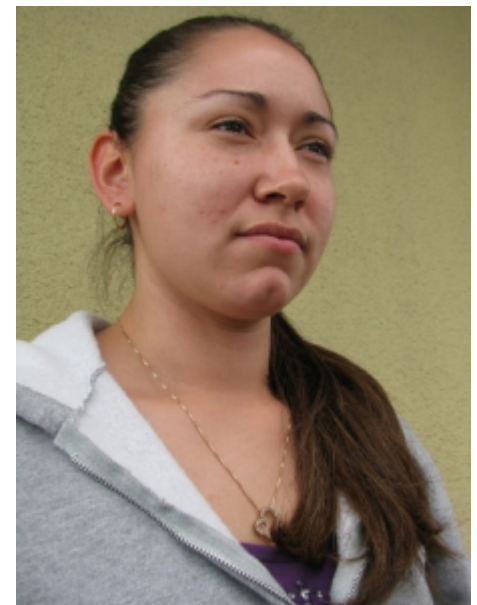
But beyond Allen's penchant for buying the loyalties of political figures lay accusations of something far worse: Allegations that he also used his money and influence to buy sex with several prostituted teens. These are the crimes Senator Sullivan and Attorney General Richards referred to in their press conference—and it has taken a change in federal law to bring even a glimmer of hope that justice long-denied might be served.



Bambi Tyree

Accusations that Allen pursued illegal sexual relationships with underage girls **first surfaced in court filings** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/http://www.adn.com/article/20091212/alleged-cover-cuts-allen-credibility>) by former state House Speaker Pete Kott during an effort to overturn a conviction on corruption charges. Kott's key witness was a woman named Lisa Moore, who stated she and Allen had an affair when Moore was 19 in exchange for money, jewelry and an apartment. While above the age of consent herself, Moore maintained she introduced Allen to a 15-year-old girl named Bambi Tyree, and that Allen and Tyree had sex as well. Despite making quite a splash in the press, no charges stemming from these allegations would ever be filed against Bill Allen—and indeed, local law enforcement were told to stop pursuing the investigation by federal officers.

In 2008, a new—yet eerily similar—set of allegations against Bill Allen were **raised by Paula Roberds** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/http://www.adn.com/article/20150611/bill-allen-responds-lawsuit-alleging-he-sexually-assaulted-minor>), who claimed Allen picked her up when she was a 15-year-old prostituted child in the Spenard area. The pattern of money and gifts allegedly continued with Roberds, and when she was 16, she claims Allen flew her to Seattle several times for sex, which if true, would be a violation of the Mann Act of 1910. Allen admits having sex with Roberds, but claims she told him she was 19.



Paula Roberds

In the case of Paula Roberds, Alaska law enforcement felt they had a strong case against Allen, with lead investigator Kevin Vandegriff calling the evidence “very solid.” Paula's bravery here cannot be overstated: She was a young woman who subjected herself to fierce scrutiny with her accusations against one of the most powerful men in the state. Such courage is to be commended, making what happened next all the worse: Federal prosecutors **declined to bring the case** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/http://www.adn.com/article/20100820/federal-officials-wont-prosecute-bill-allen-sex-charges-aug-22-2010>) before a federal grand jury. Allen was, at

the time, a key witness in several bribery trials, including Senator Ted Stevens, and speculation persists to the present day that the oil man was given immunity from prosecution due to his involvement with the Stevens case.

State officials were stunned at this development. Dan Sullivan, who was Alaska's attorney general at the time, petitioned the federal government for "cross designation" status under the Mann Act, something which would allow the state to pursue charges against Allen. Sullivan's request, along with a second request by his successor Mike Garrity, were both denied without explanation by Eric Holder and the United States Department of Justice. Even Senator Lisa Murkowski **could not get an explanation** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/https://votesmart.org/public-statement/676301/murkowski-failure-to-pursue-bill-allen-sends-awful-message#.Vr-u3yArLnB>), only a written statement from the Justice Department that their decision was not "exercised corruptly or based upon improper considerations."

This ongoing series of non-answers and stonewalling by the federal government was something Dan Sullivan never forgot. In 2015, Sullivan added an amendment to the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act specifically to address the lack of cooperation by the Justice Department. In May of that year, the bill was signed by President Barack Obama, and Sullivan finally had the tools he had lacked previously. Under the new law, the Department of Justice is required to grant states "cross designation" status when they request it, with the only exception being if the federal government can prove it will somehow undermine an ongoing investigation. In the event of such a denial, the department is now required to respond with a detailed explanation within 60 days. Attorney General Richards filed such a request with current U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch in February of 2016—meaning one way or another, the state of Alaska will receive answers in the matter of Bill Allen.

The twisted web of sex, bribery and corruption surrounding Bill Allen is not one that can be unraveled easily. Many of Alaska's most powerful people are involved, and allegations of cover-ups, dereliction of duty and shady deals run rampant all through the story. At the core of things, though, is a group of young teens, many of whom were enticed and coerced into lives of prostitution and addiction by brutal pimps looking to sate the depraved hunger of powerful businessmen. We must not let the smoke and mirrors of rich and influential men behaving badly distract us from the true issue: the dehumanization of girls in Alaska, too many of whom have lost their lives, vanished from their families or been left with damage and trauma that may never heal.

One such man was, like Bill Allen, a prominent member of the Alaska business community named Josef Boehm. While Allen and Boehm weren't exactly friends, they did allegedly share a common interest in the exploitation of young teens—including Bambi Tyree. To understand this sordid world of pimps, drugs and exploited underage girls, **it's necessary to look at Boehm** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160415205526/https://unsilencedak.wordpress.com/2016/02/26/josef-boehm/>).

Posted on ~~February 14, 2016~~ **February 27, 2016** by **Alaska Unsilenced** Posted in **Unsolved Cases** Tagged **Alaska, Alaska Dispatch News, Alaska Serial Killer, Anchorage, Anchorage Times, Bambi Tyree, Bill Allen, Craig Richards, Dan Sullivan, John Skidmore, Josef Boehm, Murder, Paula Roberds, Sex Trafficking, Unsolved Crimes**