

# EX-MAYOR IS SENTENCED, FREED

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SUN-SENTINEL

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**F**ormer Hialeah Gardens Mayor Gilda Oliveros cried tears of relief on Monday as a judge sentenced her to serve the minimum time in jail for soliciting the murder of her ex-husband, and set her free on bond pending her appeal.

After nearly four hours of statements from the prosecution, the defense and tearful testimonies from family and friends, Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Peter Lopez sentenced Oliveros to a total of 4.8 years in a state prison and released her on a \$100,000 bond.

Oliveros, her two grown daughters, her mother, an ex-husband and other supporters happily hugged and kissed after the sentencing.

"I'm relieved that I'm going home," Oliveros said calmly as she left the courthouse. "I'm going home to have dinner with my family."

Oliveros, 50, became the first female Hispanic mayor when she was elected in 1989. Her attire soon earned her the nickname of "mini-skirt mayor."

A jury in June convicted Oliveros of two counts of solicitation to commit murder, two counts of voter fraud, one count of false swearing to an oath and insurance fraud. Jurors accepted the prosecution's argument that Oliveros asked two former Hialeah Gardens employees to murder her ex-husband, Angel Ramos, to claim a \$45,000 life insurance policy

On Monday afternoon her daughters and supporters -- including Hialeah Mayor Raul MartM-mnez and the Hialeah Gardens chief of police -- asked the judge for leniency.

MartM-mnez said he and Oliveros were not the "best of friends," but asked the judge for fairness for a person who "did well in her community for many years."

Ramos, a staunch supporter and witness for the defense during her trial, was not present.

Oliveros, dressed in black jeans, a gray shirt, a yellow coat, white socks and sneakers, appeared sullen, but calm. She cried at times, her head hanging low as she held the hand of her eldest daughter, Yesenia Oliveros.

"She's my best friend," Yesenia Oliveros said as she sobbed before the judge.

Jesebelle Oliveros, her youngest daughter, begged Lopez to "let my mom be home with me."

And Oliveros herself pleaded tearfully: "Please allow me to be at home with my children."

The defense maintained Oliveros did not receive a fair trial, and asked for the charges to be dismissed. Attorneys Michael Pizzi and Ed Shohat questioned the credibility of Robert Godwin, the prosecution's star witness, and said she could not be tried for solicitation of murder because no agreement was made.

But the prosecution said the state statute on solicitation of murder only "requires that the request be made in earnest."

As she rushed to her car after the sentencing, Oliveros said she was confident she would win the appeal.

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