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# Berlin Sun Files Motion to Unseal Arrest Records in Sen. Woodburn Case

 By Nancy West h 19 hours ago



Screen shot of photo on the Gorham 4th of July Celebration Facebook page

Sen. Jeff Woodburn, D-Whitefield, is pictured waving to the crowd walking next to [redacted], who is running for Coos County treasurer, at the Gorham 4th of July parade. Last November, Woodburn announced his engagement to [redacted].

## By Nancy West, InDepthNH.org

It's no secret in the North Country who accused state Sen. Jeff Woodburn, D-Whitefield, of domestic violence because she chairs the Coos County Democratic Committee and is running for county treasurer.

But Senior Assistant Attorney General Geoffrey W.R. Ward refuses to release her name citing New Hampshire's Victim Bill of Rights, although he conceded there is nothing that specifically prohibits releasing the names of domestic violence victims or accusers.

[redacted] continues to chair Democratic committee meetings causing some disagreement between people who support Woodburn and those adamant about protecting [redacted]. Woodburn announced their engagement last November.

Not only was [redacted]name left out of the [news release](#) the state emailed to reporters on Aug. 2, the arrest warrant and affidavit in Woodburn's case have been sealed in 1st Circuit Court-District Division-Lancaster. Ward referred to her only as Woodburn's "intimate partner."

Ward wouldn't say why the records are sealed or why the state filed a motion to seal them. The motion to seal is also under seal, Ward said. Although InDepthNH.org and New Hampshire newspapers generally don't identify rape victims, the names of all other adult crime victims, including domestic violence, are usually public.

### **Motion to unseal**

Berlin Sun managing editor Barbara Tetreault has filed a motion to have the Woodburn court records unsealed. She cited a New Hampshire Supreme Court case that places the burden to seal records on the party seeking non-disclosure.

Tetreault said with the Sept. 11 primary approaching, the public has a right to view the records. Woodburn faces a write-in candidate, Kathleen Kelley of Randolph, as a result of the criminal charges against him.

Woodburn's arrest also breathed new life into the campaign of his Republican challenger, David Starr, who was viewed as a longshot before.

"Voters deserve to know the facts and probable cause used for Mr. Woodburn's arrest before being forced to make a decision at the polls," Tetreault wrote. The court has yet to rule.

### **No change**

Ward said withholding the name of Woodburn's accuser isn't a shift in office policy.

"There's not been a change from my perspective," Ward said. "This is something we have tried to do in a number cases involving our practice to protect victims' identities from disclosure as much as possible to respect their privacy in these matters."

Ward recited the first part of the Victim Bill of Rights as his reasoning: "The right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process."

Sealing affidavits and warrants is common practice in ongoing investigations to protect the integrity of the investigation, he added.

### **No comment**

[redacted] declined to comment when reached via Facebook messaging. She referred InDepthNH.org to attorney Patricia LaFrance who said [redacted] declined to comment.

Woodburn, 53, of Whitefield, has pleaded not guilty, but has yet to address the allegations publicly.

Woodburn is charged with nine misdemeanors. The three-term senator is charged with biting the alleged victim's arm and hand, hitting her in the stomach, throwing a cup of water in her face, then throwing the empty cup striking her in the face, breaking her dryer by kicking the door, kicking the locked door of her home and trespassing.

### **Divided north**

[redacted] appears to have wide support on the Coos County NH Democrats Facebook page that has added the purple ribbon denoting domestic violence survivor to its profile picture. The page also added a TED talk video about why domestic violence victims don't leave.

A New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence Facebook post urges people to contact the Union Leader "to tell the newspaper to stop naming the victims of crime." That after the story about Woodburn's arrest mentioned his engagement to [redacted].

Amanda Grady Sexton, the Coalition's director of public affairs, said she was disappointed InDepthNH.org is publishing the alleged victim's name and will "call out" the nonprofit news outlet for doing so. She said it is best journalistic practice to withhold the name of alleged victims in sex assault, domestic violence and child abuse cases and said a number of New Hampshire news outlets agree with her.

"The Concord Monitor, Seacoastonline, New Hampshire Public Radio and WMUR have all made a commitment not to publish the victim's name in this case," Grady Sexton said.

Releasing the names of domestic violence victims can put them in danger and cause them to be discriminated against

in housing and employment, she said.

“There is no reason other than sensationalism and trying to sell papers and gain clicks,” Grady Sexton said.

### **Woodburn support**

Berlin Mayor Paul Grenier, also a Democrat, stands solidly in Woodburn’s corner. He questioned why [redacted]’s name wasn’t released by the attorney general and why court records are sealed.

“This whole things smells ... This is disgraceful what’s happening,” Grenier said. “It was sealed at the request of the so-called victim and the real victim here is Sen. Woodburn.”

Grenier said Democrats were quick to call for Woodburn, who was seen as a rising star in Democratic politics, to step down because he’s “not liberal enough for the ultra-liberals.”

[redacted] continues to run Democratic committee meetings although she has been asked to step down, Grenier said. “Talk about super awkward,” Grenier said.

When the matter of Woodburn came up at last week’s committee meeting, [redacted] did recuse herself, he said. “It was the elephant in the room. This is a circus beyond belief,” Grenier said.

According to Ward’s news release, the dates of the charges against Woodburn include throwing a cup of water in the victim’s face and throwing the empty cup at her striking her face on Aug. 10, 2017; striking her in the stomach with his hand on Dec. 24, 2017; biting her left hand, resulting in bruising on Dec. 15, 2017; biting her right forearm, resulting in bruising, on or between June 9, 2018, and June 10, 2018; breaking her dryer door by kicking it on Aug. 10, 2017; trespassing and kicking in the locked door of her home on Dec. 24, 2017.

## **Kathleen Kelley**

Kathleen Kelley decided to run against Woodburn in the primary as a write-in candidate because there are so many important issues facing the North Country.

Kelley, who lives in Randolph with her husband Mark, who runs the family business White Mountain Lumber Company, is well-respected for her work on many local boards and currently serves on the board of the North Country Education Services.

Kelley spent the weekend campaigning, including five hours at the Moose Festival in Colebrook.

“I’m not judging Jeff at all,” Kelley said, adding they share the same position on many issues. “I know because of these charges he’s going to be busy. He’s going to be in court defending himself.”

She has worked closely with Woodburn and believes he has done a good job.

“It’s going to take time and effort and once this all gets behind him – if it does – he will be able to come back into service to the North Country because he’s done a great job over the past six years.”

Having [redacted] chair the committee meetings has been an issue, she said. Kelley asked [redacted] to step aside temporarily to avoid any appearance of bias, but she declined, Kelley said.

“She’s young and cares passionately about democratic values,” Kelley said.

Kelley agreed with Grady Sexton that the names of all crime victims should be confidential unless the victim chooses otherwise.



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