

By MARY FLOOD Copyright 2010 Houston Chronicle

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Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz will be a consultant on a third effort to get incarcerated businessman R. Allen Stanford freed before his January trial.

Deemed a flight risk because of his connections to Antigua and denied bail, Stanford, 60, has been behind bars since June 2009 and in solitary confinement some of that time. His prior teams of lawyers have twice argued that he cannot adequately prepare for his defense and must be let out, under house arrest and possibly with guards.

Though lawyers argued Stanford must be able to use a computer

and review boxes of documents, which are not allowed in federal detention, their two prior efforts have failed at both the trial and appellate court level.

The law professor says he thinks he can combine arguments about violations of Stanford's Fifth Amendment right against double jeopardy, Sixth Amendment right to defend himself and Eighth Amendment right to pre-trial freedom to get this case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"My philosophy is: Never give up," said Dershowitz, who visited Stanford in Houston this week. "Just because something was turned down doesn't mean you shouldn't try again."

Dershowitz said he will be a consultant to Stanford's new Houston-based attorneys, Mike Essmyer and Robert S. Bennett. The law professor, known for his defense work nationwide, said he's talked to Stanford's previous lawyers over time as well.

Dershowitz said Thursday he does not believe that when Congress passed the bail reform act that allowed for Stanford's detention that they had in mind a man who could be in prison for two years before the end of his trial.

"It's so unfair to simply lock somebody up and not let them prepare for their defense," said Dershowitz.

Stanford is accused of 21 counts of conspiracy, fraud, bribery and obstruction of justice. He and others are accused of cheating investors who bought certificates of deposit issued by Stan- ford International Bank on the Caribbean island of Antigua, and sold through companies affiliated with Houston-based Stanford Financial Group.

Stanford has denied he committed any crimes.

Stanford's co-defendants were not imprisoned. Laura Holt had all her funds frozen in February 2009 when the Securities and Exchange Commission filed a civil lawsuit that froze all company assets as well and put the firm under a receiver through a Dallas judge.

Essmyer said they want Dershowitz on the team because they believe if a Supreme Court justice saw how difficult it is under Bureau of Prison rules to get paperwork to Stanford so he can aid in his own defense, this wouldn't be happening.

"I cannot effectively defend the man if he can't read over the paperwork. Prison rules don't match what's necessary in a big paper case," Essmyer said.

Essmyer said they hope Lloyd's of London insurance will pay for Dershowitz.

Prosecutors generally do not comment for stories like this, and federal prosecutor Paul Pelletier had no comment Thursday.

In previous court cases and in briefs responding to these same arguments made by Stanford's previous lawyers, prosecutors have said Stanford's dual citizenship, international contacts and possible access to hidden or donatec funds make him a flight risk.

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