

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

More Information? Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

News on the Internet. News Releases and related documents are posted at our website.
Go to: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

Contact: stee1019.rel
Michael Drewniak, Public Information Officer FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
973-645-2888 Oct. 19, 2007

Former Assemblyman Alfred Steele Admits Attempted Extortion

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

TRENTON – Former state Assemblyman Alfred E. Steele pleaded guilty today to attempted extortion, admitting that he accepted a total of \$15,500 in bribes from an undercover insurance brokerage company in return for his official assistance in steering public contracts to the company, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Steele, 53, pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal Information charging attempted extortion under color of official right before U.S. District Judge Anne E. Thompson. Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Steele faces a probable range of between 37 and 46 months in federal prison.

Steele remains free on \$200,000 bond pending sentencing.

Steele was arrested on Sept. 6, along with 10 other public officials and one private citizen. Following his arrest, Steele resigned both his seat in the Assembly and his job as a Passaic County undersheriff.

Steele admitted today that between March and August this year, he accepted cash payments totaling \$15,500 in exchange for agreeing to use his official influence to assist in steering government insurance brokerage contracts to the FBI undercover company. He also admitted that, in return for his assistance in securing contracts for the company, he would receive a portion of the insurance brokerage's revenue.

Steele admitted that he arranged and attended meetings between representatives of the FBI undercover company and public officials within his legislative district and in other municipalities. Among them, he said, were meetings with officials from the Paterson School District, the Paterson Housing Authority and City of Passaic and City of Orange.

In return for his assistance to the FBI undercover company, Steele accepted corrupt cash payments, as described in detail in the Information, as follows:

- April 2, in Newark, \$5,000, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the Paterson School District.
- May 16, in Paterson, \$1,500, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the Paterson Housing Authority.
- May 24, in Orange, \$1,500, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the City of Orange.
- July 9, in Newark, \$1,500, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the City of Newark.

- Aug. 2, in Passaic, \$1,500, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the Paterson School District.
- Aug. 13, in Clifton, \$3,000, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the Newark Board of Education and City of Passaic.
- Aug. 20, in Elizabeth, \$1,500, to use his official influence to assist the company in securing contracts with the City of Orange.

The charge to which Steele pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. However, in determining an actual sentence, Judge Thompson will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge, however, has wide discretion and is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, for the investigation against Steele and the other defendants. He also credited for their assistance in the investigation prosecutors and investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore F.L. Housel.

The cases against Steele and the other defendants are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Bocian and Christopher J. Gramiccioni.

-end-

Defense Counsel for Steele: Greyson Hannigan, Esq.