



Department of Justice

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FORMER DEPUTY STATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT MERLE TEMPLE SENTENCED TO OVER 8 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON

Co-Defendant A. Stephan Botes Also Sentenced

Atlanta, GA - MERLE TEMPLE, JR., a former Deputy State School Superintendent under LINDA C. SCHRENKO, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Clarence Cooper to 8 years, 1 month in federal prison for conspiring to steal public funds and funnel them into Schrenko's failed gubernatorial campaign in 2002. TEMPLE, 56, of Evans, Georgia, who pleaded guilty on January 10, 2005, to conspiracy, theft of public funds, and wire fraud, was also ordered to perform 100 hours of community service and pay a special assessment of \$300. TEMPLE has already paid \$199,500 in restitution pursuant to the terms of his plea agreement.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said about the case, "The sentences imposed today show that there are serious consequences for stealing public funds and for attempting to obstruct criminal prosecutions. These sentences should also serve as a strong reminder in this election year that illegal schemes used to finance political campaigns will be detected and those responsible will be held accountable."

Co defendant A. STEPHAN BOTES, 49, of Alpharetta, Georgia, was also sentenced today to serve 8 years, 1 month in federal prison. There is no parole in the federal system. SCHRENKO was sentenced in July to serve 8 years in federal prison and ordered to pay \$414,887.50 in restitution. SCHRENKO was scheduled to begin her federal prison sentence today.

According to Nahmias, the plea agreements and evidence in the case: In the summer of 2002, TEMPLE and SCHRENKO, who at the time was the State School Superintendent of Georgia, conspired with STEPHAN BOTES, the owner of a computer consulting company, to fraudulently obtain over a half million dollars of federal funds administered by the Georgia Department of Education. The evidence showed SCHRENKO personally ordered the Georgia Department of Education to issue checks in amounts just under \$50,000, totaling over \$500,000, to various companies owned and controlled by BOTES purportedly to provide computer licenses and services to the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, the

Georgia School for the Deaf, and the Governor's Honors Program. The products and services were not provided, and TEMPLE caused approximately half of the fraudulent proceeds to be secretly funneled into SCHRENKO'S campaign and to third parties to pay expenses for the campaign. TEMPLE, SCHRENKO and BOTES funneled some of the funds into the campaign through straw donors and other funds through a bank account TEMPLE opened under the name Paradigm Pioneers. After the campaign, TEMPLE used some of the funds deposited into the Paradigm Pioneers account to pay for personal expenses of SCHRENKO, including \$9,300 for cosmetic surgery.

TEMPLE attempted to obstruct the prosecution of SCHRENKO by offering to tailor his testimony at her trial to benefit her case, by withholding information from the government. TEMPLE provided SCHRENKO's attorney questions that the attorney could ask that would aid her case and hurt the prosecution.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Inspector General, and the FBI.

Assistant United States Attorneys Russell G. Vineyard and Daniel A. Caldwell are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias, United States Attorney or F. Gentry Shelnett, Chief, Criminal Division, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.