

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Passaic City Councilman Pleads Guilty
to Accepting \$26,000 in Bribes

(More)

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TRENTON – Passaic City Council member Marcellus Jackson pleaded guilty today to attempted extortion, admitting that he accepted 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.

Marcellus Jackson, 39, entered his plea before U.S. District Judge Anne E. Thompson, who scheduled sentencing for March 26. Jackson pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal Information that charges him with attempted extortion under color of official right. Judge Thompson continued Jackson's release on a \$200,000 bond pending sentencing.

Jackson was arrested on Sept. 6, along with 10 other public officials and one private individual. The arrests resulted from a public corruption investigation that progressed from southern to northern New Jersey.

At his plea hearing, Jackson specifically admitted to accepting four corrupt cash payments between January 2007 and August 2007, ranging from \$2,500 to \$6,000, in exchange for his official assistance in attempting to obtain City of Passaic insurance brokerage contracts for the undercover company. Jackson stated that on March 22, he voted against two Passaic City Council resolutions relating to insurance brokerage contracts, which had the effect of favoring the undercover company. Jackson also admitted to accepting corrupt payments in exchange for arranging meetings with other public officials to obtain insurance business for the undercover company. (The Information to which Jackson pleaded guilty puts the total amount of corrupt payments he accepted at approximately \$26,000, an amount he admitted at his plea hearing is subject to forfeiture to the government.)

The charge to which Jackson pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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 of that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, for the investigation involving Jackson and the other defendants.

Christie also thanked Assistant Prosecutors and Investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore F.L. Housel, for their assistance in the investigation.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Gramiccioni and David A. Bocian of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark and the Criminal Division in Trenton, respectively.

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Defense counsel: Miles R. Feinstein, Esq. Clifton