



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEPTEMBER 23, 2008

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FORMER JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY TO OBSTRUCTION

BIRMINGHAM, AL: Alice H. Martin, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama and Carmen S. Adams, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, announce that MARY MILLER BUCKELEW, 62, of Columbiana, AL, has agreed to plead guilty to a one-count criminal Information filed today which charged her with obstruction of justice.

BUCKELEW was elected to the Jefferson County, Alabama, Commission in November 1990 and served on the Commission until November 2006. From late 2002 until November 2006, she served on the Committee tasked with overseeing Jefferson County's finances.

In 1996, the Commission entered into a consent decree and agreed to renovate the County's sewer system. To fund the improvements, the County Commission participated in numerous bond offerings and entered into numerous swap agreements totaling billions of dollars. Specifically, between March 2003 and December 2004, the Commission approved five bond offerings and four swap agreements involving billions of dollars. BUCKELEW participated in the approval of these transactions.

"Buckelew has admitted, in her filed plea agreement, that she took gifts from an Investment Banker knowing that they were offered for the purpose of influencing her official actions. For approximately \$4,000.00, she entered the spider web of corruption that surrounds the financing of Jefferson County's sewer project and the bond swaps" said U. S. Attorney Alice H. Martin. "As a result of these corrupt transactions, Jefferson County is now in a financial crisis of unprecedented proportions. This investigation is active and ongoing and additional charges will be forthcoming."

BUCKELEW, other Jefferson County Commissioners, certain unelected Jefferson County officials, financial advisors, and an investment banker from Montgomery, Alabama traveled to New York City on several occasions, including in December 2003 and November 2004, to discuss bond transactions with banks and other firms. The investment banker's firm received millions of dollars in fees from the bond and swap transactions involving Jefferson County.

On December 11, 2003, BUCKELEW found shoes and a purse she admired at Salvatore Ferragamo, an upscale boutique on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The investment banker bought these items, valued at approximately \$1,500.00 and mailed them to BUCKELEW'S office at the Jefferson County Courthouse. Similarly, on November 7, 2004, on another bond-related trip to New York City, the investment banker bought approximately \$1,119.00 worth of items for BUCKELEW from the Ferragamo store and again mailed them to her courthouse office. Also during that November 2004 trip the investment banker paid approximately \$1,400.00 for a spa day for BUCKELEW.

BUCKELEW has admitted that she understood the investment banker as attempting to influence her actions as a Jefferson county Commissioner.

On August 11, 2008, BUCKELEW appeared before the federal grand jury in Birmingham. When questioned about the gifts, BUCKELEW attempted to obstruct, influence, and impede the grand jury's investigation of the bond transactions by denying that the investment banker had purchased the goods or services for her. She later admitted that she had received the gifts and that her testimony had been untruthful. After admitting her wrongdoing, she agreed to cooperate with the government.

BUCKELEW faces a federal prison term of up to 20 years, a fine of up to \$250,000.00, or both, as well as up to three years Supervised Release.

"Public Officials must comply with the same rules and laws as the citizens they were elected to serve," stated IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge Reginael D. McDaniel. "Since public corruption is the type of crime that generally is motivated by greed, IRS-Criminal Investigation is committed to do its part by conducting a thorough financial investigation. The money trail always leads to those at the center of the corruption."

"When public officials violate the trust of the citizens they serve, it undermines our democracy and the citizens' trust in honest government. The citizens of north Alabama can be assured that the FBI and our partners will continue to aggressively investigate all public officials who violate that trust," stated Acting FBI Special Agent in Charge Charles E. Regan.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI and Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division. Assistant United States Attorneys George A. Martin, Jr., Miles M. Hart and Tamarra Matthews Johnson are prosecuting the case.

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