

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
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Camden Councilman Sentenced to 20 Months in Federal Prison for Extortion

(More)

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CAMDEN – Former Camden City Councilman Ali Sloan El was sentenced today to 20 months in federal prison for accepting \$36,000 in bribes in exchange for steering Camden redevelopment work to a contractor, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Joseph Rodriguez also ordered Ali Sloan El, 53, of Camden, to serve three years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison sentence. Judge Rodriguez continued the defendant's release on an unsecured personal recognizance bond pending his surrender to the Federal Bureau of Prisons by July 19.

On Aug. 30, 2006, a three-year South Jersey corruption investigation resulted in guilty pleas to extortion from Camden City Council member Ali Sloan El and Atlantic City Council president Craig Callaway, both of whom admitted that they accepted bribes from a contractor, in exchange for municipal contracts; the contractor, Terry Jacobs of Pleasantville, pleaded guilty to an unrelated drug conspiracy charge.

During his guilty plea before Judge Rodriguez, Sloan El admitted taking approximately \$36,000, in six different payments between 2003 and 2005, in exchange for steering Camden redevelopment work to Jacobs. The promised projects included concrete, sidewalk and other construction work, including a Cooper's Ferry Development Association project and parking for the New Jersey Aquarium.

"Sloan El posed as an honest man of the people who wanted to cure Camden's ills," Christie said. "His guilty plea and sentence reveal that in fact he was a fraud who sold his office for personal gain. Like too many others before him, Sloan El's conduct reinforces the most cynical view of New Jersey citizens that public officials are in office to serve themselves."

Callaway, 48, of Atlantic City, admitted he also took approximately \$36,000 in six different payments between 2003 and 2005, in exchange for using his position to assist Jacobs in obtaining construction work in Atlantic City projects. Those projects included development of the Garwood Mills site, a 6.4-acre waterfront site on the northeast inlet of Atlantic City. On March 13, 2007, Judge Rodriguez sentenced Callaway to 40 months in prison and ordered him to pay a fine of \$1000.

Jacobs, 42, a contractor in Atlantic City, Camden and elsewhere, pleaded guilty to an unrelated drug offense, admitting to conspiring to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine in Gloucester County on Jan. 30, 2004. During his guilty plea, Jacobs further admitted paying bribes – independently and later as a cooperating witness for federal authorities – to public officials including Callaway and Sloan El in exchange for preferential treatment on city contracts. Jacobs is scheduled to be sentenced on May 2, along with two additional Atlantic City councilmen who pleaded guilty to accepting bribes.

On Oct 4, 2006, Atlantic City Council members Ramon Rosario, 48, and Gibb Jones, 79, admitted they accepted bribes in exchange for their official influence in the awarding of city development contracts. Rosario admitted taking a total of \$14,000 in bribes from between August 2004 and November 2004. Jones admitted that he accepted more than \$5,000 in regular cash payments in 2003 from a businessman seeking city development contracts for an associate.

In determining Sloan El's sentence, Judge Rodriguez consulted 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 and other factors. The judge, however, was 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 from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Pedro Ruiz, in Newark, with the ongoing investigation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Thomas J. Eicher and Judith H. Germano, both of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Rocco Cipparone, Jr., Esq., Haddon Heights