

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
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Trenton, New Jersey 08608

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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

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soto1015.rel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 15, 2008

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## Superseding Indictment Adds Bribery and Extortion Charges Against Former Passaic Councilman Jonathan Soto

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(More)

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TRENTON – A federal grand jury today returned a 23-count Superseding Indictment that adds additional bribery and extortion charges to the corruption Indictment returned against former Passaic Councilman Jonathan Soto, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Soto, 33, was originally named in a 15-count Indictment, returned on January 30, that charged him with extortion, bribery, conspiracy, and attempted drug possession in connection with his alleged acceptance of \$22,000 in exchange for his influence on local government contracts. In addition to being a councilman for the City of Passaic, Soto was also the chairman of the City of Passaic Redevelopment Agency.

The Superseding Indictment returned today adds eight counts of bribery and attempted extortion. These counts allege that Soto accepted or solicited corrupt payments on behalf of himself and other public officials in Passaic, NJ. Soto will be arraigned on the Superseding Indictment before U.S. District Judge Anne E. Thompson on Oct. 22 at 11:30 a.m.

The Superseding Indictment charges the defendant with soliciting and accepting cash payments from representatives of an FBI undercover business in exchange for Soto exercising his official authority to secure business with the City of Passaic, including the Passaic Board of Education and the Passaic Redevelopment Agency. The Superseding Indictment also added charges that Soto solicited a \$10,000 corrupt cash payment for a high-ranking elected government official in Passaic (Individual 1 in the Indictment) to ensure the promotion of a municipal employee of the City of Passaic.

The one count of conspiracy and each of the ten counts of attempted extortion carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison. Each of the ten bribery counts carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison. Soto will be arraigned on the Superseding Indictment on a date yet to be determined.

Despite indictment, all defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Thompson would, upon a conviction, 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. The judge, however, 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, with the investigation of Soto. He also credited prosecutors and investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of

Theodore F.L. Housel, for their assistance in the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David A. Bocian and Hope S. Olds, of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division.

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Defense Attorney: José L. Ongay, Esq. Philadelphia