



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASSOCIATE CIRCUIT JUDGE PLEADS GUILTY TO BRIBERY

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that an Associate Circuit Court Judge in Sullivan County pleaded guilty in federal court today to soliciting a bribe.

Jeffrey D. Sayre, 37, of Milan, Mo., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Howard F. Sachs this afternoon to an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on April 3, 2003. **Sayre** has served as an associate circuit court judge for the 9th Judicial Circuit in Sullivan County, Mo., since January 1999.

“**Sayre** will pay a steep price for his crime,” Graves said. “Justice is not a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder or dispensed under the shadow of a dollar sign.”

Under the terms of today’s plea agreement, Count Two of the federal indictment, charging a conspiracy to obstruct justice, will be dismissed at the time of sentencing. **Sayre** also must surrender his law license to the Missouri Supreme Court.

Sayre acknowledges that all of his actions, whether criminally charged or not, will be considered as relevant conduct.

“All of his actions, including the conspiracy to obstruct justice by murdering a federal witness, will be taken into account by the court to determine the severity of his sentence,” Graves said.

“Today’s plea agreement helps maintain confidence in our system of justice. No one is above the law. **Sayre** will be held accountable for his actions. He will surrender his license to practice law, and the government will ask the court to impose a harsher sentence by departing upward from the federal sentencing guidelines range.”

By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Sayre** admitted that he solicited a \$10,000 bribe from William Lance May, a defendant in his Sullivan County courtroom. Graves explained that May was arrested on March 22, 2002, on various state drug and firearms violations. After May paid the bribe, Graves said, **Sayre** issued an order to suppress the evidence against May and discharge his case.

Sayre also admitted that he attempted to obstruct justice by conspiring to kill May after he learned May was cooperating with federal authorities.

According to Graves, Sullivan County Prosecuting Attorney James G. Spencer filed a criminal complaint on March 25, 2002, charging May with four counts of violating state drug and firearm laws. On April 19, 2003, **Sayre** met with May and accepted the \$10,000 bribe.

On July 26, 2002, Spencer filed a First Amended Complaint charging May with possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute Darvocet, possession of Darvocet, possession of drug paraphernalia, and carrying a concealed weapon. A preliminary hearing was conducted before **Sayre** on that same day, at which time May's attorney filed a motion to suppress evidence. On Sept. 11, 2002, **Sayre** entered an order suppressing the evidence and discharging May in this case.

As a result of today's guilty plea, **Sayre** could be subject to a sentence of up to 20 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$1 million. **Sayre's** sentencing will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the U.S. Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney William L. Meiners. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, NITRO (the Northwest Missouri Team Response Operation) Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Milan, Mo., Police Department, the Sullivan County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, and the North Missouri Drug Task Force.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow