



FORMER SHERIFF AND 2 WORKERS INDICTED IN ALLEGED CONSPIRACY TO COLLECT BRIBES FOR JOBS

TRENTON : Attorney General Paula T. Dow and Criminal Justice Director Stephen J. Taylor announced that former Middlesex County Sheriff Joseph C. Spicuzzo and two men who worked under him in the sheriff's office were indicted on Aug. 19 by a state grand jury on charges they conspired in a jobs-for-cash scheme in which Spicuzzo collected approximately \$112,000 in bribes from individuals seeking positions or promotions in the sheriff's office.

According to Director Taylor, the Division of Criminal Justice Corruption Bureau obtained an 11-count indictment charging Spicuzzo, 66, of Helmetta, Darrin P. DiBiasi, 43, of Monmouth Junction, who is a former Middlesex County sheriff's investigator, and Paul A. Lucarelli, 46, of South River, a suspended Middlesex County sheriff's officer. The three men are charged with various counts of conspiracy, official misconduct and bribery, all second-degree offenses. Spicuzzo is also charged with second-degree pattern of official misconduct. All of the charges carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in state prison, and certain charges against each defendant carry a mandatory minimum term of five years in prison without possibility of parole.

The charges stem from an investigation by the New Jersey State Police Official Corruption Bureau and the Division of Criminal Justice Corruption Bureau. Deputy Attorney General Vincent J. Militello presented the case to the state grand jury for the Division of Criminal Justice.

"This indictment demonstrates that nobody is above the law in New Jersey, and those who hold high office will be held accountable if they betray the public's trust," said Attorney General Dow. "It is an important step in our prosecution of Spicuzzo and his alleged accomplices."

"Most members of law enforcement consider their badge and honor sacred,

Indictment alleges Joseph Spicuzzo took \$112,000 in bribes with help of co-defendants

but we allege that Spicuzzo put badges and honor up for sale in the Middlesex County Sheriff's Office," said Director Taylor. "We allege that this corrupt jobs-for-cash scheme continued for over a decade."

"It is always disappointing when we uncover corruption in law enforcement - much more so when it reaches to the very top of an agency," said State Police Superintendent Colonel Rick Fuentes. "Nevertheless, our Official Corruption Bureau remains tireless in their pursuit of illegal activity by those who are supposed to be serving the public."

The indictment alleges that between March 1996 and November 2008, while serving as county sheriff, Spicuzzo demanded that eight different individuals pay him bribes in return for him appointing them as new sheriff's investigators or promoting them within the sheriff's office. Sheriff's officers are hired through the civil service system, but sheriff's investigators are appointed by the sheriff. The state's investigation revealed that young applicants who were trying to obtain law enforcement positions as investigators were forced to use all sources of funding available to them to pay the alleged bribes.

It is alleged that, directly or indirectly, Spicuzzo solicited and accepted individual bribes ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 from seven individuals seeking to be hired as investigators. Those individuals include DiBiasi, who allegedly paid a \$5,000 bribe prior to being hired in 1999. It is alleged that Spicuzzo also took two bribes from a sheriff's officer in the amounts of \$7,000 and \$5,000 in return for two promotions within the sheriff's office between 2007 and 2008. It is alleged that each person who paid a bribe was given the promised

position.

The indictment alleges that DiBiasi and Lucarelli conspired with Spicuzzo in the jobs-for-cash scheme, which continued throughout the period covered by the indictment. It is alleged that DiBiasi collected three bribes from individuals seeking investigator positions and delivered them to Spicuzzo between 2002 and 2005, including two bribes of approximately \$12,500 and one bribe of approximately \$10,000. It is alleged that Lucarelli collected a bribe of approximately \$25,000 from an individual seeking an investigator position and delivered it to Spicuzzo in 2008.

Spicuzzo was initially arrested by State Police detectives on March 7. Lucarelli was arrested in on March 14, and DiBiasi was arrested on July 7. All three were released without posting bail.

Spicuzzo was Middlesex County Sheriff for nearly 30 years. Following his arrest in this case, he resigned as Middlesex County Democratic Party chairman, a position he held for 16 years. He also resigned from his position as a commissioner on the New Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority, to which he was appointed in December 2009.

Lucarelli was suspended without pay from his position as a sheriff's officer following his arrest. DiBiasi retired from his job as a sheriff's investigator in June of this year, prior to his arrest.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Sergeant First Class Garrett Duffy, Detective Brian Murphy, Acting Detective Sgt. Lisa King and other members of the State Police Official Corruption Bureau, under the supervision of Capt. Thomas T. Goletz, and by Deputy Attorney General Militello, under the supervision of Deputy Attorney General

Christine Hoffman, Chief of the Division of Criminal Justice Corruption Bureau. Deputy Attorney General Mark Ondris is also assigned to the case.

Under state law, second-degree crimes carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in state prison and a criminal fine of \$150,000. Each defendant could potentially face a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison without parole because each is accused in certain counts of the indictment of conduct that occurred after April 14, 2007, the effective date for New Jersey's statutory sentencing enhancements for public corruption.

Spicuzzo is charged with one count of conspiracy, three counts of official misconduct, one count of pattern of official misconduct, and six counts of bribery. DiBiasi is charged with one count of conspiracy, three counts of official misconduct, and one count of bribery. Lucarelli is charged one count of conspiracy, three counts of official misconduct, and one count of bribery.

The indictment is posted with this release at www.njpublicsafety.com.

The indictment is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. The indictment was handed up to Superior Court Judge Gerald J. Council in Mercer County, who assigned it to Monmouth County, where the defendants will be ordered to appear for arraignment on the charges.

Attorney General Dow and Director Taylor noted that the Division of Criminal Justice Corruption Bureau has established a toll-free Corruption Tipline 1-866-TIPS-4CJ for the public to report corruption, financial crime and other illegal activities. Additionally, the public can log on to the Division of Criminal Justice web page at www.njdcj.org to report suspected wrongdoing. All information received will remain confidential.

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LOCAL TALK
NEWARK
Celebrates
4th
Anniversary

ORANGE TO LAUNCH RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (RSVP)

On Wednesday, August 24, 2011, Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. announced that Orange will partner to create a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

The program is design to connect volunteers over 55 years old to service opportunities in Orange that match their skills and ability. The volunteers put their talents to work in a wide range of activities such as building houses; immunizing children, providing food for the homeless, helping with relief services, improving and protecting the environment, and much more.

Volunteers share the experience of a lifetime. They utilize their talents and share their skills and knowledge with others in the community. RSVP is for anyone age 55 and over who wants to get involved in rewarding and important volunteer work in Orange.

The program offers flexibility for

service opportunities of anywhere from a few hours to full days.

The program is attractive because it allows volunteers to choose how and when they work. Volunteers receive a pre-service orientation, on the job training, and supplemental insurance while on duty.

RSVP is a national program under the Corporation for National and Community Service's Senior Corps.

Newark Emergency Services for Families coordinates RSVP programs for Essex and Hudson County.

"After retirement, there are still enormous contributions that seniors can make in sharing their knowledge, experience, skills and talents with others. RSVP is a win-win program," Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. said. "The community wins by taking advantage of all that seniors have to offer. Seniors

win by knowing they are continuing

to contribute to the well being of others, lead useful and productive lives and make use of a lifetime of

experience."

For more information or to volunteer, please contact the Mayor's Office at (973) 266-4005.

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