

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Former Branchburg Republican Committee Treasurer Admits Embezzlement of Committee's Funds

(More)

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NEWARK – The former treasurer of the Branchburg Republican District Committee pleaded guilty today to a charge of mail fraud for the misappropriation of \$10,000 from the committee's bank account, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Russell Herzog, 46, of Branchburg, who served as the treasurer of the Branchburg Republican District Committee ("BRDC") from approximately June 2002 through December 2007, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge William H. Walls to a one-count Information that charges him with devising a scheme to defraud and to obtain money from the BRDC and its contributors, thereby depriving the committee of its right to the honest services of its treasurer.

Judge Walls released the defendant on a \$10,000 unsecured bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled Jan. 20, 2009.

At his plea hearing, Herzog admitted that on two separate occasions during 2003, he withdrew \$6,000 and \$4,000 and used the funds to pay personal debts which bore no relation to the activities of the BRDC. Herzog admitted that, in his role as treasurer, he submitted a fraudulent quarterly form to the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission in Trenton, which failed to document these withdrawals of money by Herzog and incorrectly stated the amount of cash on hand at the end of the respective quarter.

The charge of mail fraud carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Walls will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, a 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 and thus defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all the time imposed by the court.

Christie credited Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, in Newark, for the investigation leading to the guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark J. McCarren, of the Special Prosecutions unit, in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Blair Zwillman, Esq., Woodbridge