

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
402 East State Street, Room 430  
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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Michael Drewniak, Public Information Officer **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Passaic Mayor Pleads Guilty to Extortion

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(More)

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TRENTON – Passaic Mayor Samuel “Sammy” Rivera pleaded guilty today to attempted extortion, admitting that he accepted a bribe from a government cooperating witness who was representing an undercover insurance brokerage company in return for his official assistance in steering public contracts to the undercover company, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Samuel “Sammy” Rivera, 61, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Freda L. Wolfson to one count of extortion under color of official right. Judge Wolfson continued Rivera’s release on a \$200,000 bond pending his sentencing, which is scheduled for Aug. 15.

Rivera was arrested on Sept. 6, 2007, along with 10 other public officials and one private citizen. The arrests were part of a public corruption investigation that progressed from southern to northern New Jersey.

“By his own conduct, Mr. Rivera added himself to the growing roster of corrupt public officials in New Jersey,” said Christie. “The citizens of Passaic deserved better.”

At his plea hearing, Rivera admitted that on Aug. 13, 2007, he accepted a \$5,000 corrupt cash payment from a government cooperating witness. Rivera acknowledged that the payment was in exchange for using his official influence in attempting to designate the undercover company as the City of Passaic’s insurance broker of record.

Rivera admitted that he agreed to use his official influence to assist the company in obtaining additional insurance brokerage business with the Passaic Housing Authority, Passaic Board of Education and the Passaic Valley Water Commission.

Rivera also admitted that on Aug. 29, 2007, he arranged and attended a meeting between key Passaic officials and members of the undercover company, where he advocated in favor of the undercover company’s business ventures.

The charge to which Rivera pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Wolfson will 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, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge has wide discretion and 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 of that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun. He also credited prosecutors and investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore F.L. Housel, for their assistance in the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher J. Gramiccioni and David A. Bocian of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark and Criminal Division in Trenton , respectively.

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Defense counsel: Henry E. Klingeman, Esq. Newark