

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Paul J. Fishman, U.S. Attorney

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Contact:

Michael Drewniak, Public Affairs Officer
973-645-2888

frie1120.rel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jury Convicts Union City Man for Bribing West New York Building Official

(More)

Michael Drewniak
Public Affairs Office

973-645-2888

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TRENTON – A federal jury convicted a Union City man today of bribery for paying \$5,000 to a West New York construction official to permit an illegal apartment, the U.S. Attorney’s Office announced.

The trial of Herman Friedman, 49, began with opening arguments on Monday before U.S. District Judge Anne E. Thompson. The jury delivered its verdict today after about two hours of deliberations.

In convicting Friedman, the jury rejected the defense’s contention that Friedman had been entrapped.

Judge Thompson scheduled sentencing for March 3.

Friedman was charged on Sept. 4, 2008, via criminal Complaint and subsequently indicted on one count of bribery.

Friedman owned a building at 235 56th St. in West New York that contained an illegal apartment on its ground floor. The building also lacked a Certificate of Occupancy, which is a legal document certifying that the building is suitable to be occupied.

According to testimony and evidence at trial, after a routine inspection on March 2, 2007, the Township of West New York issued a Notice of Violation instructing Friedman to remove the illegal apartment. Friedman was informed that he either had to remove the apartment or obtain a variance from the West New York Zoning Board.

On Aug. 30, 2007, Friedman met the West New York construction code official – who testified at trial for the government – at the illegal apartment and allegedly offered to pay the him \$5,000 to “put it on,” referring to permitting Friedman to utilize the illegal apartment. Friedman also attempted to conceal his activity by using hand signals to indicate the amount that he was willing to pay.

Friedman paid the \$5,000 bribe on March 25, 2008, during a visit to the code official. Friedman arrived at the official’s office with an envelope containing fifty \$100 bills, which the code official counted out in Friedman’s presence. The meeting was audio and video recorded by the FBI.

For the conviction on one count of bribery, Friedman faces a maximum statutory prison term of 10 years and a fine of \$250,000.

The case was tried by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Bradley A. Harsch and Richard E. Constable of the U.S. Attorney’s Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

The investigation was conducted by Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun.

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Defense Counsel: Lawrence S. Lustberg, Esq., Newark