

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Longtime Political Adviser to Joseph Vas Admits Role in Congressional Campaign Fundraising Fraud

(More)

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NEWARK – A longtime political adviser to Assemblyman and former Perth Amboy Mayor Joseph Vas pleaded guilty today to participating in a “straw-donor” scheme to funnel contributions to Joseph Vas’s 2006 primary campaign for the Democratic nomination for Congress in New Jersey’s 13th District, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

Raymond Geneske, 73, of Perth Amboy, who was the Municipal Chairman of the Perth Amboy Democratic Party, as well as a member of the Perth Amboy Board of Education (“PABOE”) and the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (“MCIA”), admitted his role in a larger scheme to solicit and receive conduit contributions for Joseph Vas, a congressional candidate in the Democratic primary election for New Jersey’s 13th federal district, and to directly pay and reimburse straw donors for their contributions with cash.

Geneske pleaded guilty to a one-count Information before U.S. District Court Judge Susan D. Wigenton. The Information charges him with contributing to a federal candidate in the names of others, which violation aggregated to \$10,000 and more during a calendar year. The charge carries a maximum penalty of two years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or 1,000 percent of the aggregate amount of the violation, whichever is greater, according to Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brian R. Howe and Jenny R. Kramer.

Today was Geneske’s first appearance in court in connection with the government’s ongoing corruption and campaign-financing fraud investigation surrounding Vas and others. Judge Wigenton released Geneske on an unsecured \$10,000 bond pending sentencing scheduled for Sept. 21.

Marra said the investigation in Perth Amboy is continuing.

From at least in or about 2005 to about June 2006, Geneske admitted that he was a key political adviser to Vas, who was then a candidate in the Democratic primary election for U.S. Congress for New Jersey’s 13th District. Geneske admitted that during that time he participated in a scheme with others, to include Vas himself, to circumvent the cash limitation and reporting of federal election laws in order to illegally obtain more than \$10,000 in contributions for the “Vas for Congress” campaign committee.

As part of the scheme, Geneske stated that in about February 2006, he accepted approximately \$5,000 in cash from an individual who was a prominent developer in Perth Amboy (the “Developer”) and then solicited other individuals to write checks out of their personal checking accounts to the “Vas for Congress” committee. Geneske admitted that he provided these individuals with the cash to fund or reimburse their contributions and that he used some of the cash himself to make a contribution in his own name to the “Vas for Congress” committee.

As a further part of the scheme, Geneske stated that in about May 2006, he accepted approximately \$25,000 more in cash from the Developer, which Geneske subsequently distributed to fund and reimburse additional “conduit-contributions” to the “Vas for Congress” campaign. In that regard, Geneske stated that he discussed with Vas the fact that he had distributed approximately \$20,000 of the cash from the Developer to “straw-donors” for Vas’s congressional campaign.

Vas and another longtime aide, Melvin Ramos, were arraigned yesterday on their own indictment, which was returned on May 19 (unsealed on the 20th). For a news release on those charges, follow links at www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/2009releases.html

Marra credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, with the ongoing investigation that led to today’s charges. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Howe, Deputy Chief, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kramer, both of the U.S. Attorney’s Special Prosecution’s Division.

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Defense counsel: Henry E. Klingeman, Esq. and Anna Cominsky, Esq., Newark